

THE INVOCATION

ISSUE 5



invocation

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greetings from the perverted one

editorial by disciple of magash



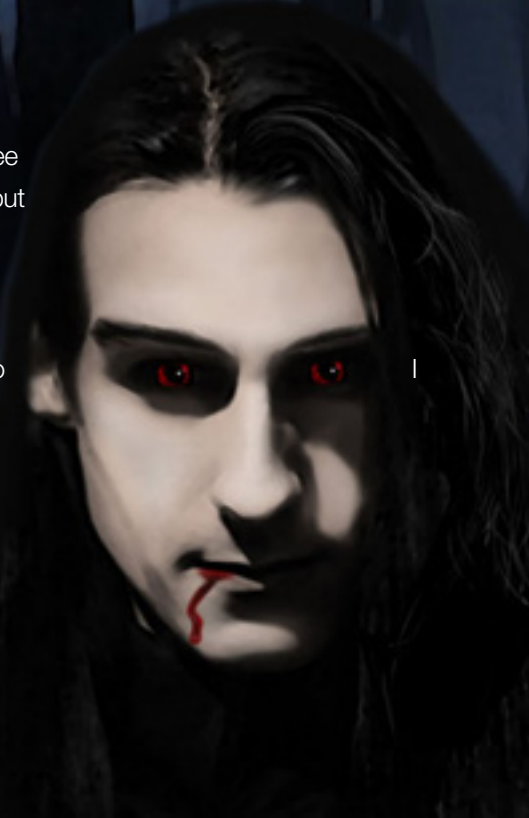
I am extremely proud of the fact that we have managed to keep this fantastic (if I do say so myself) magazine going for that long, and it wouldn't have been possible without the hard work and effort put in by the various members of Carpe Noctem. The Invocation has had various contributors over its time, too many to list here, however you all know who you are so on behalf of myself and the Invocation's many readers, a big thank you!

As well as the anniversary celebrations, there is something else to get excited about, Warhammer Fantasy the 8th Edition. This new edition has many controversial changes such as massive power increase of magic, and the fighting in extra ranks in combat. As is common in such cases already the doomsayers have been out in force, saying that this and that have been nerfed, and whilst in some cases they may be right, I for one look optimistically to this new edition.

It does have many radical changes, but at least it shakes things up, makes them fresh and interesting. For me the 7th edition was starting to get stagnant with many "cookie cutter" lists appearing over and over again, because due to how the 7th played they were very effective. With the 8th I see much more variation, more magic items for character variation, percentages allowing for a better mixture of units. Magic being much more random, but also much more fun.

Yes it is going to be a struggle for some to adapt, especially so for my beloved Vampire Counts as some of the new rules really work against them. But half the fun of playing is figuring out what works and what doesn't, and with all the options now there should be much more builds to test out. So hope all you of you reading this take a step back and think, and instead of looking at everything negatively and packing away your army, use your imagination and look to what you can do with the new rules, rather than what you can't.

However we don't expect you to do it on your own. For a while now we have been preparing at Carpe Noctem for the new edition, and so in this issue you will find not only an overview of the new magic items, but also the main things to watch out for in the new rules. That is just a start and you can find even more help at Carpe Noctem itself. So chin up and remember – it's just a game so have fun!



game news

Well first and foremost the 8th edition is here! Of course you already know this unless you have been living under a rock, and at Carpe Noctem we have been preparing. Our Moderators and True Bloods have been deep in discussion and they will be able to offer you some advice and answers to your many questions.

WFO System

The Warhammer Fantasy Online system is currently undergoing testing, and looks to be ready for use at the back end of July. Already CN's integrated Dice Roller has been finished. However it is just version one, expect many upgrades to improve functionality in the future.

Secondly, although it is all hush hush at the moment, there are already upgrades to the basic WFO system in planning. Some features will result in integration between army lists posted up on CN to the WFO system, and also vastly improved graphics and functionality.

Chat Room

Firstly I must offer my apologies for the delay in implementation of the Chat Room. There are still some functions that are being worked on, and I expect the implementation in the next couple of months, around the same time as the Zombie Shop.

Khemri Back in Action

Here at CN we are very pleased to see that our bony cousins from the sand are under new management, and look to be getting back into the swing of things. To show our support in this issue you can find an excellent Tomb Kings related article by Lord Marcus, and we would recommend you visit their site: www.tomb-kings.net

Tale of Gamers

For the new edition one of CN's well known (perhaps I should infamous?) members had the great idea of starting up a Tale of Gamers. Onikaigo (who I should note ranks very highly in my perverted army) has certainly got the project into shape, with no

less than 25 people signing up, including myself. This looks to be a lot of fun, and in the next issue we will be providing an update in the Invocation, to see who has managed to stick with it, and who has dropped by the wayside.

User Projects – Back next Issue!

Due to the new edition many of the user projects were put on hold. Now we all have the rulebook in our grubby mitts, we can get cracking converting over the rules we have created for the Legion of Nagash, Bloodline Armies and Zombie Pirates. Of course if that sounds fun to you, then why not pop over and help out, everyone's welcome.

changing times

Written by Disciple of Nagash

8th edition changes compilation

Now I can already imagine many of reading this and thinking "oh no! DoN... writing about rules and tactics....it's bound to be wrong!" Well have no fear, what you are about to find here are some pointers and highlights of the 8th edition changes found and discussed across Carpe Noctem, from some of the members who are the most well versed in such things (though I will get a rules question right one of these days!).

To be honest from the offset, we have been nerfed. There are no two ways about it. However, we have not been nerfed to the point where we are an unplayable army. In the previous edition we were a top tier army, to the point of having some very broken options (17PD lists that spammed Invocation over and over come to mind). I feel that this edition has moved us down to middle tier, meaning that whilst we can't steamroll over other armies like we use to, if we play well we can still win. That's something I actually welcome.

We know the change is going to be difficult, so this article should give you some handy tips and warnings of what to watch out for, so without further ado.....

Shooting: This is something all VC players need to be very wary of. As you all know if all the models in a unit are killed, there's no more healing them back. In the 7th edition, concentrated fire on a unit made that possible so we recommended a minimum of 15 models, especially for those with minimum protection such as core units or Grave Guard with Great Weapons. In the 8th edition this is much worse due to shooting in two ranks, or volley shots and more accurate war machines. Therefore, ideally, your infantry units that are not protected by other means should be a minimum of 20, if not 25 models strong. Also remember that a character in units of a different troop type (such as a Vampire in a Dire Wolf unit) does not get a "Look Out Sir!" roll.

Fighting in Extra Ranks: This is a big issue, especially for our weak core. In this edition you should expect to take more damage from combats and adjust your plans appropriately. Against expensive elites it's not too bad, as cost should prohibit too much, but against some of the cheaper but still effective troops (for example, Chaos Marauders) you need to be more careful

Monstrous Infantry: Previously these were not too much of an issue for us due to limited number of attacks without the CR to back it up. This has changed massively big time in this edition, as noted by Malistein:

Monstrous infantry get up to three attacks in their second rank, plus an extra stomp attack at the end of combat. This makes ogre sized units much, much more deadly in 8th edition. In particular Iron Guts, which come with great weapons for S6

attacks, but are cheap enough to reasonably field in 6 man units. The amount of hurt such a unit can put out is devastating, with your unit staring down the business end of three S5 impact hits, eighteen S6 great weapon attacks, and three S4 stomp attacks. That can easily lead to some pretty scary combat resolution, losing half a unit to casualties and the other half to crumbling.

Now, this might be an overreaction based on how much better they look when compared to how lousy they were in 7th edition, but ogres and other monstrous infantry units definitely are definitely something to pay attention to in 8th edition.

The Horde Rule: Is this special rule really worth the while for us Vampire Counts? To be honest... not really. Skeletons and Zombies who are just not offensive enough and the best option for these units is to go 5 wide as normal to ensure you have more ranks than the opposing horde, so if you do win combat, they are not stubborn. However, for some offensive units such as Ghouls which have been buffed, or Grave Guard with Great Weapons, those extra attacks may be a viable option - although keeping a five model frontage is a good idea to reduce attacks back at yourself.

To Wound: Now anything can be wounded. Yes even our zombies have a chance to wound the Toughness 10 Steam Tank (what were GW thinking making it T10?!!). Basically a roll of 6 will always wound, regardless of toughness or strength.

Unstable: We have now gained the Unstable rule, meaning we do not get any saves against crumbling (loss of wounds through combat resolution) anymore. This is not as bad as it sounds, though it does need to be thought about when planning combats. The Black Coach, Varghulf and

The Drakenhof Banner are all hit by this change. The Black Coach, Varghulf and The Drakenhof Banner are all hit by this change.

Avoiding Enemy Characters: Previously you could avoid an enemy character by hitting a different part of the unit (flank etc). However, in the new edition the character can actually move to join the fight so be careful and do your best to prepare for his untimely intervention.

Percentages: With how much our characters cost, it really doesn't

change too much for us. We can still end up with around what we use to use in the 7th edition, though if you swap out a Vampire you can get a Wight King and Necromancer or some combination thereof. The main thing that you do need to watch out

for is the enemy's choices, notably those armies that can get cheap characters. Many like the Empire or Orcs and Goblins will still be able to squeeze a Lord in at low point games, or cram in so many Heroes they can make up units of their own!



The Battle

Standard Bearer: Whilst this guy was fantastic before, now he is even better as he allows Leadership test re-rolls, which can be used in a variety of circumstances, for example:

- Any character wearing that Crown of the Damned can use this re-roll for his Stupidity test.

Model by Sea.Man On our Ld 10 Lord this means it is very unlikely (barring any modifiers) that he should suffer from Stupidity during the battle.

- He also confers this benefit on Konrad. With all those new monster rules this Special Character just got even better and now actually somewhat controllable.

- Blood Knights can now control their Frenzy by taking a Leadership test, if you put a Wight King BSB (Ld 9) in that unit, they become much more controllable.

- Units within range can re-roll their crumble test each turn if the general dies. That alone can pay for the BSB upgrade.

Of course the re-rolls are the same for the enemy as well, so the enemy BSB is a key target. Luckily most don't have access to a hero as tough as our Wight King!

Unit Command: These are much more important in the 8th, so make sure you take them. Standards play an increased role in some scenarios, such as capturing objectives, and Musicians are very handy as they increase your chances of passing the Leadership test to reform.

Magic: Elsewhere in this issue Onikaigo goes over some of the great combos you can have, however players need to watch out for some of the new spells. There are some really nasty ones that can easily kill or snipe a lord, in fact here is MasterSpark with his experiences:

It might be worth adding a particular mention to watch out for the new rule-book Lores of Magic. The two spells Final Transmutation (metal) and The Dwellers Below (life) are extremely dangerous for us since they will indiscriminately kill our army general on a single roll of '6' if the spell is cast successfully. Aside from The Carstein Ring there really is no way to get out of the line of fire (ranges 36" and 24" respectively when powered up, with no LOS required) outside of throwing your Vampire Lord into close combat where he cannot be targeted. I've lost my army general twice to these two spells over the course of 3 games, the first time on turn 2 and the second time before I had even had my own turn 1.

...so taking one of the new Dispel Scrolls may be well worth it.

Ward Saves: Previously ward saves could always be taken against any attack unless the attack specified otherwise. This has changed with the new edition, specifically any attack that causes instant death, without wounding, negates all types of saves including ward saves. These types of attack are normally characteristic tests, such as a toughness test. So double check, as that instant kill attack you thought you could save against, chances you can't now..

Regeneration: Not as good as it used to be. If during any phase you take a wound from a flaming attack, then you lose the regeneration for the rest of that phase. Something to watch out for, as a canny opponent will use a flaming attack first, and once the regeneration is lost, use a normal attack to finish the flamed unit, monster or character off.

Combining Ward and Regeneration: Just not possible anymore. If you have both then you take one or the other but not both. Not something we usually see in Vampire Counts, however for those that like to make the Blood Knight Deathstar with the Banner of the Blood Keep and the Drakenhof Banner, you are simply wasting

points. Also don't forget that if you use the Drakenhof Banner in a Grave Guard unit with Hand Weapon and Shields, you can be forfeiting your parry save.

Terror and Fear: These have been drastically toned down, so do not rely on them like you did in the 7th edition. Terror still causes units to flee, but only if the Terror causing unit is the one that charges. Note it still can work if the charge fails, as reactions are done before rolling for the charge distance.

Fear has lost the auto-break rule, instead reducing the enemy's statistics if they fail their Leadership test which they have to take at the start of every round of close combat now. Make best use of this by using the various options we have via magic items and spells to reduce the enemies Leadership, for example the Screaming Banner. It would also be prudent to try and make sure you can actually do some damage as just winning by one point of CR just won't cut it anymore.

Victory Points: You no longer get any VP for 'Half Units'. Thus we need to work harder to get every last model destroyed if we can't seem to break them and we are

still the best at keeping stuff alive by invocation. Thus the denial game just became more important.

Power Stones and Dispel Scrolls: Remember you can only take one now, not multiples like previously.



Model by Foot_of _Adhesive_Tape

True Line of Sight: A new rule I really don't like. Unlike other armies our army really suffers if our general is killed, and this rule has just made it much easier for the enemy to do that. Be very careful when positioning your general and other shooting magnets such as Blood Knights. Terrain will be helpful, and personally I will

Helm of Commandment: By far the most popular magic item of VC, but be wary of how it works in the 8th. Previously, if the character was in a unit engaged in combat, but the character was not in base to base contact with the enemy, they could still use the Helm. Not so now, if you character is in a unit that is in combat, regardless of his position he is considered to be in combat and cannot use the Helm.

The Carstein Ring: The over-priced bauble just became more effective. Why? Because as far as I am aware it is the only item that protects against instant kill attacks, including miscasting and getting sucked into the Realms of Chaos (not sure how that works mind you, maybe even the Chaos Gods can be bribed with a fancy bit of bling). I still feel it costs a tad too much, but definitely something to consider now.

The Gem of Blood: A popular choice to go on a Wight King with the Swords of Kings, this item got a great boost in the VC Errata. Now not only does it rebound the wound back, but it also rebounds all the associated effects. Killing Blow, Instant Kill, etc everything is rebounded.

Now, here is a very brief run down on how our units fare in the 8th edition:

Vampires: The Lords are actually more effective due to the fact we have more casting potential as we can have a wider variety of spells. They also benefit hugely from the new magic item selection and spell buffs out there. The only downside is their cost making them restrictive in low point games, unlike opponents such as Orcs and Goblins who can cram more heroes in. One great change that was made, that if you take Dread Knight, you can now change your mount and still keep your equipment.

In contrast the lower level Vampires have become a more debatable option. They can lack the staying power of the Wight King due to the extra enemy attacks, whilst not being much more offensive themselves. You can also get cheaper magical support via Necromancers. However they can still be tooled up to be useful in some ways. They can become combat monsters with the new items, and they can be potent with magic, such as buffing units after being equipped with Forbidden Lore and choosing one of the various new Lores. Here is one such ex-

ample that I want to try out myself:

Suicide Dragon Vampire

Vampire

Forbidden Lore – Choose Lore of Beasts
Power Scroll

This tactic is a very nasty move, but lots of fun. Put your vampire in a unit and make sure you keep him safe. Your aim is to get him into combat (though in the meantime the spells from the Lore of Beasts are still useful). Once in combat (hopefully against an expensive enemy unit) then use the scroll and throw five dice at the Transformation of Kadon to transform into a Great Fire Dragon. There is around 90% chance you will cast with Irresistible Force and also Miscast, but the Miscast result will apply to the new Dragon stats, meaning unless you are unlucky you should survive. Then you can start chomping through that enemy unit! Chances are in later turns it will get dispelled and your vampire will die, however it is still difficult to do as your opponent needs 20+, and as an added affect all his dispels attempts mean less power / dispel dice to pester you with in other ways!

Hellsteed: With the new rules flying mounts can join other units, however only with Black Knights and Blood Knights can you gain Look Our Sir! This does mean you can hide in these units when necessary, flying out to support other parts of the field when needed.

Wight Kings: With the new rules flying mounts can join other units, however only with Black Knights and Blood Knights can you gain Look Our Sir! This does mean you can hide in these units when necessary, flying out to support other parts of the field when needed.

Necromancers: Much more viable, simply because it allows us an option to take Vanhel's Danse Macabre multiple times (easier to cast now due to their +1 to cast), meaning if another character fails to cast it we have another to try it with right away. They are also cheap, so if you do miscast, well... it's not a big loss! Note however whilst it was debatable in the last edition to mount them on a Corpse Cart, it is suicidal in the new edition to do so since the Cart, being a monstrous mount, now cannot join any friendly unit.

Zombies: Just went from bad to worse. With the less effective fear rules and more attacks coming their way, they do not last long. Even if buffed they can struggle. If you are going to field them make sure you have very large units (40 or 50 strong), or increase them as soon as possible. For myself I will just be raising them mid-game as tar pits or distractions though I should warn you they are no longer as good at those duties as they used to be.

Skeletons: According to a poll on CN, they have become the core of choice. The hand weapon and shield combo, combined with having a standard and a musician just pips the more offensive ghouls.

Should be run deep for ranks, rather than in a horde as they lack hitting power. Personally I would not use the spear upgrade for the same reason. However many still feel the following are the better choice.

Ghouls Still a good choice. Their two poisoned attacks can hurt, especially if buffed, and they are an excellent choice against giants and other similar monsters. If the enemy fails their fear test they are also harder to hit due to their WS3 over the Skeletons' WS2, meaning they should seriously be considered. Against other average rank and file they can be run in a horde formation, but against tough opponents they need the extra ranks to survive. Personally I think they make good flankers, and allow the Skeleton to tar pit units head on.

In regards to the age old argument over whether to choose Skeletons or Ghouls, here is some number crunching by Malis-teen, staring with some percentages. The following table shows percentage chance of various attacks wounding against Skeletons with Hand Weapons and Shields, Spears, and also Ghouls.

Enemy Attacks	Skeletons HW & SH	Skeletons Spears	Ghouls
WS1, S3	13.89 %	16.67 %	11.11 %
WS2, S3	13.89 %	16.67 %	16.67 %
WS3 S3	18.52 %	22.22 %	16.67 %
WS4+, S3	18.52 %	22.22 %	22.22 %
WS1, S4	23.15 %	27.78 %	16.67 %
WS3, S4	30.86 %	37.04 %	25.00 %
WS4+, S4	30.86 %	37.04 %	33.33 %
WS1, S5	34.72 %	41.67 %	22.22 %
WS3, S5	46.30 %	55.56 %	33.33 %
WS4+, S5	46.30 %	55.56 %	44.44 %
WS1, S6+	34.72 %	41.67 %	27.78 %
WS3, S6+	46.30 %	55.56 %	41.67 %
WS4+, S6+	46.30 %	55.56 %	55.56 %

Conclusions: The new parry rule has seen a decrease in the resilience of Shield & Hand Weapon skeletons against all attacks of S4 or less, and is only an improvement against enemies of S6 or more. With the increased number of attacks you're going to be facing, this should probably be viewed as a debuff.

Ghouls remain competitive with shield-armed skeletons in resilience across most of the spectrum, being weaker in some cases but tougher in most, including against any enemy reduced to WS1 by a failed fear test, giving ghouls better

synergy with the new fear rules.

Defensive considerations are particularly worth noting due to the increased number of attacks you will face in 8th edition due to units attacking in ranks, as well as the reduced impact of static resolution bonuses due to the removal of the outnumber bonus.

In 8th edition, Spear armed skeletons are always less resilient than hand weapon armed skeletons, and are at best equal in resilience to Ghouls, being more vulnerable against more kinds of attacks.

Here are some common matchups:

Enemy Unit

Which is Tougher?

Goblin and Skeletons
Human Spearmen
Human Halberdiers
Ogre Bulls
Saurus Warriors
Chaos Warriors with Hand Weapons
Chaos Warriors with Great Weapons
Elf Spearmen
Dwarf Warriors with Hand Weapons
Ogre Ironguts
Orc Boyz with Choppas
Orc Biggunz with Choppas, round 1
Orc Biggunz with Choppas, round 2+
Black Guard
Chaos Marauders & Flails, round 1
Chaos Marauders & Flails, round 2+
Anything that fails a fear test

Skeletons with HW & S
Ghouls
Ghouls
Ghouls
Ghouls
Skeletons with HW & S
Skeletons with HW & S
Skeletons with HW & S
Skeletons with HW & S
Ghouls
Ghouls
Ghouls
Skeletons with HW & S
Ghouls
Ghouls
Skeletons with HW & S
Ghouls

Dire Wolves: Our puppies have been rendered pretty much useless due to losing Fast Cavalry, still having poor stats, and (still) not counting towards our minimum core restrictions. However they still have one main trick, the Dragon Trap (which you can read up more on at CN or in the first issue of the Invocation). This cheeky trap still can tie up large monsters (including riders), and the wolves are still

best to do it due to their higher movement. Alternatively they are cheap enough to take in large units of 15 or more to break ranks.

Corpse Cart: Pretty much the same as before, to be honest. It neither shines, but it's not a bad choice either. The fact that it can grant ASF could be a boon in some instances, especially against small enemy

units where if you kill them there is not enough to mount a decent counter attack. Unfortunately, having ASF is not as good as it used to be, as most decent sized units will still get to attack back.

Don't forget it does have the Monster Stomp rule.....but at S2 only. Its bound spell does need to use power dice to cast, which in reality is not something that is a priority, but perhaps an option to draw out Dispel Dice. I

n regards to its upgrades, the Balefire by itself is not as potent as it used to be, where it was most effective against low level spamming. However stacking the effects with two or more may be viable. The main reason is that if an enemy wizard fails to cast he can no longer cast this turn. Faced with a -2 modifier this may force your enemy to roll more dice, which will hopefully result in a devastating miscast for him. Finally it can no longer join units, so it can't fill out those ranks like it used to.

Bat Swarms: Was a poor choice in the last edition, is the same in this edition. Unless you like the image of them, not a viable choice.

Grave Guard: Just got better. They remain the same hardcore unit they always have been, being tough to shift with shields or punching hard with Great Weapons. However with more attacks it now means they have more chance of landing a Killing Blow. This makes them much deadlier against armoured foes, and gives you more attacks to direct against enemy characters. Just remember those Great Weapons means you will be striking last unless they have gained ASF (which cancels out ASL) from a spell or similar, though in this case it will still be at Initiative 3.

Black Knights: Unfortunately, they have been nerfed. However, take heart in the fact that it is not their rules, but the cavalry rules in general for the 8th edition, so every cavalry unit has suffered the same. They will not be breaking ranks unless you have two full ranks at the end of combat, and they are not offensive enough to take units head on. Best used in support of other units and for counter attacks.

Fell Bats: One of the things that made me swear at GW. They are no longer infantry, so they no longer are healed by D6 wounds when using IoN. They also only fly 10" as they cannot march, meaning they are slower than they used to be. They are still viable against enemy war machines if they start the game near a vampire so they can go their full 20", and then charge in turn two.

Spirit Hosts: Rules wise they haven't changed and fulfil the same rolls. However, due to TLOS they are not as effective at screening (same as any other screening units to be fair), but they are also much more at risk in this edition. Due to the powered up magic it is very likely they will be blown back to Morr's Realm, so personally I would only use them when they have been summoned using Wind of Undeath.

Varghulf: This critter is still a very good choice. He has gained the Monster Thunderstomp, in addition to his re-rolling attacks, and as such is great for his points. He does suffer due to the more attacks coming back, so either use him with other units, or hunting small units or lone characters. A great suggestion by Kalandros

was to use him as a second wave attack, coming in at the flanks of combats where your anvil unit has denied the "Steadfast" rule of the enemy. Remember the new Regeneration rules though!

Black Coach: This just became our Rare option of choice. It has access to potentially more dice, as all the dice are now in the main pool. It does not require babysitting with wizards in close proximity like it used to, and it has the added effect of helping to negate your enemies magic phase as well, as it takes the PD from their pool. The Cairn Wraith is back to Strength 5 attacks, as it's Great Weapon now confers +2S whilst mounted (, and the best news: chariots are no longer automatically destroyed by Strength 7 hits or higher. With T6 and a 4+ ward, this makes the Coach very durable, even more so when it finally powers up to being ethereal whilst having a 2+ ward via magic thanks to MR(3).

However, remember that when moving Chariots no longer get a free pivot, so every inch counts, and be careful of any terrain that is not open ground. A failed Dangerous Terrain Test causes D6 wounds if you roll a 1 on a D6. Lastly, note that as a Chariot the Black Coach will be

unable to take full advantage of the rules for flying, since it is not allowed to make march moves.

Cairn Wraiths: These favourites are still a very good option, if a little worse off than they were previously. The majority of the time they will be striking last due to their Great Weapons and Initiative of 2. Not too much of a problem if they are not facing opponents with magical attacks of course, but that unit champion may be sporting something unexpected! Like the Spirit Hosts you have to be careful of the powerful magic being thrown around combined with TLOS. Plus as the skirmisher rules have been drastically altered (for the worse in my opinion), they no longer have 360 degree LOS, and rank up albeit spaced out. I highly recommend having some play testing games to get used to the new rules with these. One thing that you can finally do is combine the effects with of the Banshee's Scream with the Doom and Darkness spell from the Lore of Death as it specifies it affects the Leadership stat. An interesting final note – the Banshee's scream now works on war machines, yes that inanimate chunk of metal can now get screamed to death!

Blood Knights: Affectionately termed Gold Knights (considering they should be made out of gold at what GW charge for them) the hardest hitting Knights in Warhammer are still one of the best. Thanks to the new frenzy rules they are much more controllable, especially if you take the previous advice about the BSB. They still hit very very hard, and are one of the few cavalry units that have the potential to completely wipe out small units on the charge. However, the new edition has definitely reigned them in a bit. It is very unlikely that they will kill all the models in a decently sized unit, and when the enemy strikes back they are just not that tough. They will also not break ranks unless again you have two ranks of five, and unlike the Black Knights, cost prohibits this for the Blood Knights. The best use of these guys will be for tough units with few or no ranks, or like the Varghulf as a hammer in the flank when the enemies steadfast has been negated one of your large units to the front.

So with all the above changes, I know some of you are thinking that things have gone bad for Vampire Counts. Well I can assure you that is not the case, and to back myself up I even wrote an article about it later in this issue!

The Doom Seeker



New Slayer Brotherhood

<http://z8.invisionfree.com/SlayerBrotherhood/>

Warhammer Fantasy Battle Reporter

<http://battlereporter.freeforums.org/portal.php>

Current and back issues available at:

<http://issuu.com/thedoomseeker/docs>

<http://www.4shared.com/dir/29941410/23ea5bcf/sharing.html>

The webzine for players who believe in
playing the game for fun.

iron metallics

Written by Redarmy27

As an army, our minions use all sorts of weapons, many of them are made of steel and others of metal. Unlike our living enemies, many of the weapons that our forces use have seen centuries of corrosion and wear and tear. Today I'll give you a tutorial about creating this effect in seven easy steps!

Meet Steve. Steve's been a farmer for most of his life and has quite the affinity for using his old scythe. Recently though, Steve has been laughed at by many of his counterparts. Let's help Steve out...



Step One:

Take some black primer and apply two thin coats over the model, making sure not to obscure detail. Fix any missed spots with some thin coats of Chaos black.



Step Two:

Mix a little bit of water and some Chainmail by GW and apply it to the metallic portions of the weapon. You'll want to keep the paint thin so that it applies to the model smoothly. This may take you a few coats, but the result will give you a nice smooth surface to work on. As a tip, I usually pain the metallic parts of the model first

as you can always cover them up with opaque paint later on. Also, be sure to rinse your brush and change your water once you're done painting with the actual metallic paint. This will ensure that you don't get the metallic flecks in your other colors.



Step Three:

Take some blue, I used P3's Cygnar Blue, and mix it with 8 parts water to one part paint. This will turn it into a glaze. You'll apply this into three thin coats. This will create a bit of depth to the metal and will also give it the blued steel look.



Step Five:

Take a dark flesh, I used P3's Iridian Flesh, and stipple it onto the metal. Keep it sporadic and away from the edges of the metal. This is the foundation for the patches of rust.

Step Four:

Now we begin the corrosion stage. Take some Devlan mud and apply it evenly to the piece. You'll want to thin it a bit with water and apply it in two applications. Make sure to brush into the creases where the most amount of grime would collect over time.



Step Six:

Take a deep red-brown, I used P3's Bloodstone, and stipple it onto the areas you built your first rust foundation on. Keep it light so you don't completely cover up the work you had just done.





Step Seven:

Mix some orange with your deep red-brown to create a brighter- orange brown. Lightly stipple this onto your rust to give it your final touch.

Add some final touches and that's it! You're all done



the blood dragons

the unparalleled masters of the blade

Written by knightofni

Introduction

The Blood Dragons, exemplars of honour and disciplined warriors of unequalled martial skill, are the undying descendants of Abhorash, The Lord of Blood and Supreme Commander of the armies of Ancient Lahmia.

After Abhorash's legendary battle with a Great Dragon, and upon releasing himself from the curse of Vampirism by drinking the dead Dragon's blood; his disciples took upon themselves the name 'Blood Dragons' in honour and memory of that same Dragon vanquished by their victorious Father.

The Blood Dragon's is amongst the most tragic of stories, more so than perhaps that of the monstrous strigoi. They are the fallen Knights; the tormented souls that have slipped from the heights of grace and have been cursed with an

unquenchable thirst.

Appearance

Blood Dragon's are often clad in full-plate suits of gleaming metal; though this armour is often lacquered and engraved with scenes of the macabre.

Scarlet and crimson are among the most common colours applied to their armour as these colours best resemble their namesake and, more visually, the bloodshed that their prowess visits upon the battlefield.

It is also common for Blood Dragon's to wear pieces of armour that have been fashioned to resemble Dragons; stylised Dragon-Wings for example are a commonly recurring motifs upon helmets and shields; skulls and other bony ornaments also often adorn a Blood Dragon's armour as a fear-inducing declaration of the

vampire's expertise.

When Blood Dragon's ride into battle, clad in their bloodied armour with shields bearing designs of death and destruction, and mounted upon terrible undead steeds, they truly are a horrifying vision of death incarnate.

Common Goals

The foremost unifying ambition for the Blood Dragon bloodline is to perfect the art of combat; to temper their martial skills and achieve levels of skill that mortals can realise only in their wildest dreams and fantasies, and ultimately be judged worthy enough to rejoin their progenitor, Abhorash, atop his mountain home.

To this day the descendants of Abhorash believe that somewhere, in the darkest and most shadowy corner of the world, where the face of the sun is

pale, Abhorash waits patiently for the triumphant return of his immortal sons.

The other aim for the Blood Dragons is directly linked to their quest for martial supremacy; all Blood Dragons aspire to discipline themselves as well as their blades so that they can strengthen their own iron will. By mastering the art of self-control they can suppress the need to feed on human blood.

Long ago, when Abhorash first became a vampire, he dedicated himself wholly to the path of the warrior so that he could achieve the self-discipline he craved so that he could resist the urge to feed upon his own people; and millennia later his descendants still walk that same path.

Traits

The principles and ideals of the Blood Dragons are more concerned with the

discipline, honour and martial prowess of individuals than the creation of unholy empires.

Unlike the domination-driven Vampire Lords of Sylvania, the Blood Dragons have no interest in attempts to subjugate the nations of the Old World, nor do they see the need to raise huge legions of the Undead instead preferring smaller, more disciplined, forces consisting of Wight Men-at-Arms to act as gruesome parodies of the retinues of mortal Nobles.

Similarly, they distance themselves from the never-ending crusades for esoteric knowledge that the Necrarch Bloodline are famed for; in most cases their aptitude for manipulating necromantic magic is limited and they view most displays of magic as both dishonourable and cowardly.

In the same manner, they also view the use of ranged weaponry as dishonourable and cowardly, as it deprives a true warrior of the chance to test his skills with an opponent one on one and this almost ritual challenge is regarded by the Blood Dragon's to be the purest form of combat.

It is an unending quest that the Blood Dragon's set themselves upon; a quest for martial supremacy, and they prefer to seek out challenging foe amongst the best fighters in an opposing army so that they

can hone their fighting skills further.

Though not all Blood Dragons frequent the theatre of battlefields in their quest for martial perfection. Some choose solitude in the mountains, living under the guise of a warrior hermit, ceaselessly training in martial discipline; others may follow a different path and become matchless assassins and favour grace and subtlety over savage melee whilst more can be found guarding lonely bridges and fords, challenging all those who would pass to test their mettle.

Given the longevity of vampires, it is entirely possible for a Blood Dragon to walk down more than one of these paths and broaden their martial capabilities, learning new techniques as the long ages pass and incorporating the militaristic knowledge of the many passing cultures and periods into their already considerable repertoire of lethal skills.

Many Blood Dragons are former Knights and Nobles of Bretonnia, since the lands of the Bretonni place utmost importance of the Knightly Code and Martial Honour.

These are the things that the Blood Dragons hold dearest so it is no wonder that so many of it is once chivalrous noble elite end up being deemed worthy to join the ranks of the Blood Dragons by their

vampiric challengers; and thus they become part of the darkness that they once swore oaths to destroy.

Whilst no vampire can be described as anything less than unnatural and evil in the eyes of men, it is the tragic Blood Dragons that are perhaps the least evil of all the Bloodlines. They eschew the insidious practices of the Lahmians, the dominating desires of the von Carsteins, the unholy pursuit for knowledge of the Necrarchs and the animalistic tendencies of the feral Strigoi. Whereas other Bloodlines ambitiously seek to master the will of others, the Blood Dragons seek only to master the daemons within themselves.

Lairs

Of all the bloodlines, the Blood Dragons perhaps have the most diverse range of environments in which they makes their homes; whether it is within the crypt of a ruined castle or tower, or in a cave in the mountain, those that follow the path of the assassin may even live a life of comparative luxury, living in the cities of the Old World.

It is hard to say which environments Blood Dragons especially favour for their lairs; though it is probably likely that a great many castle crypts and mausoleums

in the land of Bretonnia house vampires of this bloodline, since many of these vampires still stalk their old lands seeking champions and heroes against which to fight.

Perhaps the most renowned residency of the bloodline is the famed Blood Keep. Founded in the year 1887 (Imperial Calendar) by Walach Harkon, favourite son of Abhorash, when he challenged an entire Knightly Order to duel.

In a single night of bloodshed he slew almost every Knight he fought, sparing only those he judged worthy and gifted them a portion of his tainted blood; thus creating a new order, the Knights of the Blood Keep.

For fifty six years Walach and his Blood Knights terrorised the areas around Nuln and Gissenwald before the Witch Hunter Gunther van Hel assaulted the Blood Keep with a coalition army drawn from several Imperial provinces.

The gruelling siege lasted for three years before the overwhelming numbers of the vengeful Imperial army eventually stormed the Blood Keep and razed it to the ground; only Walach and a handful of his best Knights survived the siege and escaped retribution at the hands of the pursuing Imperial forces.

Famous Blood Dragons

The sons of Abhorash are warriors of legend, and the names of many of these dark champions are recorded in the histories of man; such as the aforementioned Walach Harkon whose dark reign from the Blood Keep has made his name a byword for bloody death. Others such as the Dark Knight of Maleaux and Varison the Blade are similarly remembered by the annals of history for their long centuries of bloodshed and martial superiority.

Walach Harkon – Second only to Abhorash himself in fame is Walach Harkon, the Grand Master of the Blood Keep. It was he who gave the Blood Dragons their structure as a knightly order, turning Abhorash's original ideas into reality.

Walach does not share his father's piety however, and he does not feed solely upon criminals as Abhorash did. Though he doesn't share his father's devotion to martial perfection, it is his belief that the vows of knighthood are the best way to achieve his goals. Many believe that Walach takes this idea too far though, as he insists on mimicking every aspect of knightly ceremony including, since the untimely death of his only love Aurora, absolute chastity.

Harkon will hear no argument though,

and considers anyone who does not follow his knightly traditions to the letter to be undisciplined swine that are better culled with the weakling mortals than to be allowed to taint the purity of his immortal order.



Models by Tartar Sauce

Walach was greatly insulted by the fact that the weakling mortals had managed to remove him from his glorious Blood Keep;

he took it as a great stain against his own personal honour and now his goal is to once again make the upstart humans and other vampires recognise the singular superiority of the Blood Keep and its knights.

He has sent word to all the Blood

Dragons that those who consider themselves worthy should join with him in rebuilding the glory of the Blood Keep and

in his new vision for his order.

That vision is not just to reinstate the Keep but to use it as the centre of his new campaign to exterminate mankind in order to be judged worthy by his father, Abhorash.

The Red Duke – The tale of the Red Duke of Aquitaine is an ancient Bretonnian story of which there are numerous versions; Bretonnian troubadours have used all manner of extravagant language to retell this tale over the centuries to the point at which it is near impossible to tell historical fact from artistic embellishment.

The tale concerns the once Duke of Aquitaine who was grievously wounded whilst fighting during the crusades in the distant lands of Araby, and was found in a deep coma from which none of his retainers could wake him. These same retainers then decided to carry the dying Duke the long way back to his homeland of Aquitaine.

They carried him through the scorching deserts and then on through the Orc-infested Badlands, onwards they bore him upon a cover bier. Most of his retainers died on the long and treacherous journey but, amazingly, the Duke survived this most dangerous of routes and his surviving retainers took his feverish body to his

castle chambers to die.

Eventually, the Duke's malady-stricken body gave out, and it is said that as the Duke died a dreadful gloom settled over the castle and the skies for miles around grew dark and heavy.

His knights, who had endured so much for their beloved Duke, mourned his loss greatly and they rashly swore oaths to continue to serve the Duke, even in death; an oath that would become their own downfall.

For three days the Duke lay in his sarcophagus; then on the third night an almighty storm, unlike anything ever witnessed in Aquitaine, rode the skies above the city and amidst the clamour of supernatural thunder the Duke rose from the dead and split the lid of his sarcophagus asunder. He was no longer a noble of Bretonnia but a fell champion of the undead.

In a night of bloodshed, the newly risen Duke slew his loyal retainers and then raised them to serve him in undeath; and the knights that had so rashly sworn away their souls into his eternal service returned as vengeful wights.

With his newfound powers and a massive army of the undead the Red Duke, as he was now christened by local peasants

in regards to his evil thirst and his crimson-hued armour, denounced the rule of the King and sought to overthrow him.

But the King was forewarned.

At the battle of Ceren Fields, the exemplars of Bretonnian chivalry fought against the Duke's army of the dead; and the Red Duke sought out the King amongst the field and issued him with a challenge of personal combat. The two Knights squared off against each other, and raised their lances in salute before charging.

Though both were knights of great strength and prodigious skill, the Lady blessed the King that day and he triumphed over the Red Duke, the vampire lord fell pierced by the King's blessed lance.

Without their Lord's will to sustain them, the army of undead collapsed and crumbled leaving the Bretonnian army incontrovertibly victorious.

The castle of Aquitaine was burnt to the ground and the lands around it were blessed by Grail Knights; though the King, ignoring the advice of his advisors, did not burn the body of the fallen Duke instead choosing to commemorate the life of his champion than the evil nature of his death.

The King commissioned an ornate tomb to be constructed in honour of the Duke

and sealed the Duke's body inside; he then ordered the name of the Red Duke be removed from all recorded history to protect the dignity of the Duke's family and so that these shameful events could fade from memory.

That was not, however, the end of the Red Duke.

The power of the Duke's unlife was bound within a crimson jewel that he wore around his neck; and in the darkness of his tomb, the Duke regenerated his wounds using the power of the jewel.

However, the tomb in which the Duke had been laid had been sealed by the King with the power of the Grail, and the regenerated Vampire lord was trapped inside by that same magic. The monument to his glory had, ironically, become the Duke's timeless prison.

For nearly five hundred years the Red Duke ranted and raged against his incarceration, swearing bloody revenge upon those who had imprisoned him. But for all the magic that sealed him in his tomb, his malevolent presence could not be veiled and eventually he was released from his maddening prison by a coven of weak-minded cultists.

In the years since the Red Duke's entombment, a new Duke of Aquitaine had

built his own castle on the Red Duke's ancient lands.

Gripped by an agonising need to feed and an intense jealousy, the Red Duke fell upon the people of Aquitaine with murderous intent and gorged himself on the blood of Bretonnia's peasant. Empowered by their blood, the Red Duke raised another army of the dead with which to overthrow the usurper of his lands.

Eventually the Red Duke was brought to battle, again at Ceren Fields; and once again the Bretonnian army proved too strong for the Duke's undead force. However the Red Duke proved to be too powerful for the Knights of Aquitaine to slay and a great many of them fell beneath his blade as they attempted to prevent his escape into the Forest of Chalons.

The folklore of Aquitaine has since been filled with stories of the Knight in blood-red armour that stalks the night shadows, feeding on the lifeblood of innocents; the jealous Red Duke who lingers in this world, waiting for the day upon which he will have his revenge on the lords of Bretonnia.

The Word of Hashut



The ezine for Chaos Dwarf Generals - www.chaos-dwarfs.com

Abhorash father of the blood dragons

Written by knightofni

*let your blade be your only truth, let death be your only answer,
and let your quest be for nought but to become more than what you are*

The Blood Lord, the Supreme Commander of the Armies of Lahmia or the Father of the Blood Dragons; by whatever name Abhorash is titled, he is without doubt one of, if not the greatest warrior the long history of the world has ever known.

Back in the days of Ancient Lahmia, he was the greatest among the Captains of the King's Guard. Handsome, strong and virtuous, Abhorash was an unparalleled warrior, a star ascendant amid the Lahmian army and it was not long before his success came to the sinister attentions of Neferata, Queen of Lahmia.

With evil intent in her heart, she summoned him to the Temple of Blood and bade him drink from the chalice that she offered; but the chalice was poisoned with the blood of the vampiric Queen and



as soon as Abhorash drank from it, his damnation was sealed.

For days Abhorash resisted the urge to feed, but with every torturous hour that passed, the need to sate himself upon human blood grew stronger and stronger.

Eventually his resistance crumbled and in a single blood-soaked night of animalistic rage Abhorash butchered twelve men and women and drained them of their lifeblood; only when his unholy thirst was quenched did he realise what he had done.

It is said that he wept tears of blood in grief for his victims and that every year after, on that day, he lit twelve candles in the city's Temple of Blood in memory of the lives he had taken. Abhorash vowed to learn discipline to keep his raging thirst under control and dedicated himself further to the ways of the warrior in order to harness the great power that he had been given.

With his new found martial skill, Abhorash rose quickly through the ranks of the vampiric ruling elite until he became the supreme commander of Lahmia's armies, and he was given the honorary title of the 'Lord of Blood'.

Whilst he and his sons attempted to control their unholy thirst and pursued the ever greater heights of martial skill, the other vampires in Lahmia had no such discipline

and, despite Abhorash's repeated warnings, they ignored his rules and often hunted for blood in the other cities of Nehekhar.

It was not long before the other Masters' arrogance incurred the vengeful wrath of the neighbouring cities, and their armies forged an alliance against Lahmia.

For many months Abhorash and his warriors attempted to hold back the armies of Nehekhar, and he won many victories against them but, being grossly outnumbered, Abhorash was eventually forced back to the gates of Lahmia.

Despite his best efforts, the gates of Lahmia were broken and the high spires of the city were toppled; even the great Library was burnt to the ground by the vengeful Nehekharans, and street by street Abhorash was pushed back to the steps of the Temple of Blood itself. Here, Abhorash led the Queen's own bodyguard in a last desperate, and hopeless, defense of the Temple. Not even the Lord of Blood could hold back the tide and knowing that the other True Borns had either fled in cowardice or been slain, he was forced to abandon Lahmia to its fate.

Abhorash was irreversibly changed as he watched his beloved city destroyed and as his howl of anguish rent the sky, he vowed to be mankind's adversary for all eternity. Devastated, the Lord of Blood

headed northwards with his four surviving sons, taking with him only the battered armour that he wore and the blood-stained weapons that he carried.

Centuries passed and Abhorash wandered aimlessly, seeking a sign which would give a new purpose to his immortal existence when he chanced upon a great mountain, its pinnacle wreathed in smoke and fire. Abhorash was strangely drawn to the lonely mountain top and, ignoring the advice of his sons, he challenged himself to scale its sheer facade.

Destiny, it seemed, had finally caught up with the Lord of Blood. At the mountain's summit, Abhorash was confronted by an almighty crimson Dragon and he drew his sword, relishing the chance to test his skills against an opponent such as an ancient Dragon. For a whole night Abhorash and the Dragon fought back and forth, their fire and fury shook the mountain and lit up the night sky. Each dealt the other a score of wounds but as the first rays of dawn broke the horizon it was the Vampire Lord who stood atop the mountain victorious.

As the Dragon thrashed about in its last moments of life, Abhorash seized its throat and drank deeply. Intoxicated by the potent blood of the great beast, Abhorash cast the broken carcass of the eldar wyrm from

the mountain and cried out in exultation. His search had ended. He was freed from his thirst for human blood, and in casting off the curse of vampirism he had become the ultimate warrior; an immortal man with the considerable powers of a vampire but without the need to hunt for blood. Abhorash had battled the daemon within himself and emerged victorious.

On that day, his sons took the name 'Blood Dragons' in honour and memory of the mighty wyrm that their father slew. Some legends tell that Abhorash still sits atop that same mountain, where the black shadows are darkest and the sun's burning rays are weakest, waiting for his sons to return to him having completed their quest for perfection.

Others say that he went further north still, travelling deep into the heart of the Chaos wastes to seek out new and ever more challenging foes; whilst some less credible tales say that he went east to the land of Giants or that he followed the path of Sigmar and passed from this world into godhood.

Perhaps the most likely of legends tell that he still wanders the Old World, disguised as a lonely traveller or a young thrall, that seeks out the worthy amongst his immortal descendants, wherever they may be found, to test their skills against his own.

Abhorash, the Lord of Blood

M	WS	BS	S	T	W	I	A	Ld
6	10	5	5	5	4	8	5	10

Abhorash counts as a Lord choice.

Points Cost: 600

Equipment: Abhorash is equipped with Full Plate Armour, a Hand Weapon and a Shield.

Mount: Abhorash rides a Barded Nightmare, for a total armour save of 1+. See the Vampire Counts army book or the rule book reference sheet for rules regarding the Nightmare mount.

Magic: Abhorash is a level 2 Wizard, although he will never cast spells of his own. Do not roll for his spell generation before deployment. He will be able to dispel as normal.

Vampiric Powers: Abhorash has the Red Fury, Supernatural Horror and Bloodfather Exemplar (see below) Vampiric Powers.

Special Rules: Undead, Vampire, Frenzy.

Bloodfather Exemplar

As the ancient founding father of the Blood Dragons, Abhorash has set himself as the martial peak to which all of the world's Dread Knights aspire.

Abhorash's attacks have the Heroic Killing Blow and Armour Piercing special rules. Abhorash benefits from having the Always Strikes First special rule, and he also counts as having a 5+ ward save while he is participating in a round of close combat. This special ward save is increased to 4+ while Abhorash is involved in a challenge.

General Supreme

The esteemed general of ancient Lahmia and all her forces, the Lord of Blood was known as both a warrior of peerless might, and also a flawless commander. He marshalled his troops into countless victories no matter the odds and continues to demand utter and complete authority over them, even beyond their death.

Abhorash will always be the army general, unless another Master Vampire is included in the same army. The range of Abhorash's Vampire special rule is increased to 12", regardless of if he is the army general or not. In addition, Abhorash himself counts as carrying the army battle standard, even though he does not actually bear one

into battle. Note that this does mean that another eligible model may not purchase the army battle standard.

Dragonblood

Not only did he cleanse himself of his red thirst by imbibing the blood of the great dragon - Abhorash's physical prowess increased ever further, to the point where even the most grievous injuries are unable to topple his unnatural vitality.

Abhorash is immune to the Killing Blow special rule. Note that this does not protect him against Heroic Killing Blows.

The Dragon's Teachings

"Greatness in battle is won by conquering not only your opponent, but yourself also. Heed these words well my sons, for they will be the key to mastering your destiny..."

Abhorash is assumed to automatically pass his Leadership tests for testing whether or not he will be forced to declare a charge due to being Frenzied. This ability is passed on to any Blood Knight unit which he joins.

Strength in Steel

"Trust not in the arcane to aid you in times of strife. The winds blow whence they wish, but one's inner strength is constant. It is the one true sign of your greatness. Find

and harness this inner strength, unfettered by reliance on that which lies outside of your control, and yours will be glory everlasting..."

Abhorash may never be the explicit target of a friendly spell. He will never receive benefits from being inside a unit which is then augmented or otherwise helped by a spell, although said unit will still enjoy the spell's effect. In addition, Abhorash counts as having Magic Resistance (2).

Strength in Glory

Striding through the battle with purpose and determination, the Lord of Blood brings a swift and honourable death to whomever stands in his way. Drinking deep from his personal victories, Abhorash rejuvenates himself by reveling in the bloodshed, radiating terrible glory.

Abhorash must always issue and accept challenges whenever possible. When Abhorash successfully defeats an opponent in a challenge (in other words, killing him personally) he automatically recovers one of his previously lost wounds. This will not be able to take him above his starting number of wounds.

how the mighty have fallen...

Written by Disciple of Nagash

...or have they?

So earlier in this issue I looked at some of the many changes for VC, and it doesn't look too good. When the Errata and the FAQ came many people, including myself went "Oh no!" but, looking more closely at it, has our army really fallen that far?

To get off on the right footing let's be honest straight up. VC was very strong, perhaps to the point of being over powered, in the last edition. Not like the Daemons' "is-it-even-worth-getting-out-my-models" over powered, but we still had some broken combos. So we have not gone from being a competitive army to being an unusable army, in my opinion we have gone from being an over powered army to being a competitive army, and that is a big difference.

So what does that mean? Well firstly, the VC are no longer a way to an easy win for the commanding general. Before, even an inexperienced player could go magic heavy and just raise and raise, ensuring an

easy but ultimately boring victory against many opponents. Hence why previously CN's recommendation was to try and go for a more combat orientated force. But now you actually have to work and think for your victories, which trust me, means when they come they are all the sweeter. If you are willing to put in some time, effort, and practise, it is still more than possible to lead your Undead legions to victory. But for those who don't believe me, here are a couple of reasons why that is possible...

Magic Potential

We are still one of the most potent magical armies, and that is due to one main thing; all our characters excluding the Wight King can cast magic. This is quite a big deal, as most of the other armies have to choose between characters that are fighters or casters. We can do both, and we can actually do it better in this new edition. Due to having power dice randomly generated, it means that your combat

orientated Vampires can still put a decent pool of dice to use. It also means that one character failing to cast is not such a big deal. If another army's wizard fails to cast or miscasts, chances are in low to middle point games, they will have no other wizards to use the remaining dice. Not so with us, normally we have at least two magic capable characters if not more. If one fails, then it's onto the next!

The new Lores are also quite a boon to us. Many of the buffs and hexes work fantastically for us, especially those of the Lores of Shadows and Death. Doom and Darkness especially makes all the Leadership tests we incur, along with the Banshee's Scream, something which works well in our favour. This is something which we have easy access to.

Let's not also forget the fact we have a very potent Lore ourselves, with spells that can be recast and possibly the best spell in

the game; Vanhel's Danse Macabre. We can have it multiple times if we wish by choosing Necromancers (any chosen spells do not count for duplicating spells), so if one fails to cast, it's simply onto the next! Our Necros are cheap enough to have a few of them to keep our troops moving and healed if necessary, so don't be afraid to use them.

Finally we can go magic heavy and get a more reliable phase than other armies. With Master of the Black Arts we can ensure we have a stable amount of power dice, regardless of the Pool Dice roll. Keep in mind though that only the Vampire with the power can use these additionally generated dice. Usually it can ensure we have enough dice to blast through the opponent's dispel dice, or if they have potent defence (such as dwarves) we at least stand a chance of doing something worthwhile.

Did I Ever Tell you You're My Hero?

Barbara Streisand song quotes may seem out of place (though in my mind being forced to listen to them is very scary!), but that sentence is certainly apt to one of the best Heroes in Warhammer – the Wight King. This guy certainly hasn't been nerfed. For very cheap points he is still as tough as a Lord, and with his Killing Blow he's a force to be reckoned with. He can also be kitted up with items such as the Sword of Kings and the Nightshroud to take on most characters (including Lords). The best thing is that now we have no slots but percentages, we can get more of these guys at lower points if needs be.

Great Magic Items

There's been so much moaning about The Drakenhof Banner being nerfed, but again I think in the last edition it was the Banner of Mozzarella, hence why most tournaments banned it or made it count as a Hero slot. In this edition it is still damn good. If you are going for a 40 strong horde of Grave Guard, the ability to give them all regeneration is still potent, the main difference this time round is that you might want to use your noggin! You can't just throw this down the middle of the table, but instead use it carefully where you know it will

not come under too many flaming attacks.

On top of that we have some other items, which again are among the best. Banner of Blood Keep, how many other 4+ ward saves vs ranged attacks are out there? Considering the amount of shooting there is now, this is really worth its points. Don't forget that it specifically states that it protects against ranged attacks – so it includes spells and anything else that doesn't hit in close combat. The Helm as usual is superb, it needs a bit more planning but again it's one of the items that's worth its points now, not under-priced. Other items we overlooked before (good items, but we were so powerful we didn't bother with them), are very much worth it. The Tomb Blade, keep those skellies going now we can't rely in Invocation of Nehek like we used to be able to. The Staff of Damnation meaning 30 or more Killing Blow attacks from those Grave Guard, before combat even begins! All these new combos and we haven't scratched the surface on how they can combo with the new magic item list.

Psychology

Of course this has been taken down a peg.....or ten. But come on now, it was hardly winning by tactics when you were

auto breaking enemy units by one skeleton. In the 7th edition it was a game breaking tool, in the 8th edition it is what it should be, a handy bonus. Used right in combination with other things it can really help (Aura of Dark Majesty, Doom & Darkness, Screaming Banner....the list goes on!), having your enemy at WS1 can prove to be handy and keep your models from dying. If you think it is critical for that combat to go well, use the items you have to hand to sway those Leadership tests in your favour. The fact that every unit has this is still a huge bonus.

The next big....no, scrap that, massive bonus is our whole army is unbreakable. Why? Because it allows you to plan much more effectively around it. If you want that Skeleton unit to hold that flank, you can damn well bet it is going to sit there until it is annihilated, unlike enemy units which can flee at inopportune times, leaving a flank unprotected and perhaps even causing a cascade of panic tests. The key word here is reliability. Our troops will do what we want, so use that to your advantage. Don't moan that we can't flee, plan around it. You know what the unit is capable of, they aren't going anywhere you don't want them to, in a game where movement is the key, that is a huge advantage and one that's often

overlooked.

Magic Potential

We are still one of the most potent magical armies, and that is due to one main thing; all our characters excluding the Wight King can cast magic. This is quite a big deal, as most of the other armies have to choose between characters that are fighters or casters. We can do both, and we can actually do it better in this new edition. Due to having power dice randomly generated, it means that your combat orientated Vampires can still put a decent pool of dice to use. It also means that one character failing to cast is not such a big deal. If another army's wizard fails to cast or miscasts, chances are in low to middle point games, they will have no other wizards to use the remaining dice. Not so with us, normally we have at least two magic capable characters if not more. If one fails, then it's onto the next!

Combat

So many many moans about how poor our troops are in combat. Well I don't know where the rest of you are looking, but it is obviously not the same book I'm looking at. Ghouls are one of the best offensive core units out there, two poisoned attacks, buff them with Vanhels and they have the potency to tear through other core and (thanks to poison) other high toughness units alike. For those that say what about Skeletons, they are not supposed to win by killing! That's like moaning about the fact that they can't fly! They are designed to win by being a high Combat Resolution anvil, so use them that way. Get them in deep ranks to take off the steadfast of your opponent, hit the enemy unit with Ghouls in the flank and things suddenly look a whole lot better.

Grave Guard. Many noted them as perhaps the best heavy infantry in the 7th edition. Well why would that have changed? They still have all the same great combos, able to be tooled up to hit even enemy characters on 2+, wounding on 2+ with potential Killing Blows. The only difference now is they get more attacks due to the second rank, and they should get to attack back even if striking last. So the only thing that has changed for the Grave Guard is

they have gotten better and they are still cheap for their points. A 30 man unit is very inexpensive for what it does, and supported right it will stand up to most core, special and even rare units out there.

Rare Choices. Our rares were pretty good in the last edition to the point of being over powered, such as ten man units of Cairn Wraiths. This time around Wraiths have been nerfed to just being.....well just good, and all our other rares got a buff in some way.

Vampire characters. Now let's get this right, our Vampires tooled up with some of the new items are insane, they really are. If you want a combat monster you can have one. How many Hero level characters can be kitted up to have 3 attacks at WS6, ASF with I6 (meaning re-rolls to hit on most troops) at S5, and then for every wound inflicted getting another attack, and still enjoying a 2+ armour save whilst being on foot? Oh not forgetting the character is still a level one wizard as well. That's just a Hero vampire who will carve through the enemy, the Lord level characters get really nasty and with access to decent ward saves now, they can go toe to toe with most enemy characters.

Unstable

Finally, the most important thing for most of you. "Unstable", the dreaded word. For those that have played the game for many years, cast your mind back to before the 7th edition. Did we get ward and regeneration saves against crumbling then? Nope. We were still competitive and playable? Of course we were! If you are in the position where you are relying on saves against crumbling to win you the game, they you just haven't played well enough. This change only affects a couple of units and characters at best, for the majority of the army it is still the same, so you should find that of all the changes, Unstable will actually affect you the least. Just don't be doing something silly like throwing a Varghulf into the front of a fully ranked unit and expecting him to hold for long.

I could go on and on, but just the few points above show we are far from unplayable. Yes we have been nerfed, but only to the point where some of our items and combos are now not over powered, but fair.

When you look at your Vampire Counts army on paper remember we are not like other armies. We work in synergy, especially

with our characters to win. That skeleton, zombie, etc unit looks poor until you accept and learn it is meant to fulfil a purpose and work with the other units to win, not to charge down the battlefield like a unit of Chaos Warriors.

I hope I have managed to cheer some of you up and show you that we are far from being retired to our crypts. What I have mentioned above is also just a tip of the iceberg, so pop along to CN's tactics section to find out about all the new 8th edition tactics!



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Battle report

The way of the
warrior
is found in death

An Undead Samurai tournament report

By Johnny B

On the 28th March, I attended the Watford Dirty Wizards one day tournament, which was, marvellously, twenty minutes walk from my house. It was 2250 points, with comp similar to the South Coast GT (the VC comp is predictably long so best to look it up on the web).

So, without further ado...

NB: This is a 7th edition battle report submitted before the new edition. It is still an excellent report of the VC in their heyday though. Enjoy! DoN

THE SAMURAI UNDEAD

Oda Nobunaga, Vampire Lord

+ Summon Ghouls + Forbidden Lore
+ Master of the Black Arts + 2 Dispel Scrolls + Power Stone

Gozu, Vampire

+ Summon Ghouls + Dark Acolyte
+ Helm of Commandment + Black Periapt

Makara Jurozaemon, Wight King

+ Battle Standard + The Drakenhof Banner
+ Great Weapon + Skeletal Steed

Gaki,

13 Ghouls + Ghast

Gaki,

13 Ghouls + Ghast

Gaki,

13 Ghouls + Ghast

Ashigaru,

20 Zombies + Standard, Musician

Inugami,

5 Dire Wolves

Hatamoto,

20 Grave Guard + Full Command + War Banner

Kibamusha,

6 Black Knights + Champion + Banner
+ Royal Standard of Strigos

Akuryo,

5 Cairn Wraiths + Banshee

Oni,

Varghulf

Game One

mick's high elves

Mick was a veteran Warhammer player, sporting some very nostalgia-inducing figures, which I fondly remembered from my childhood.

Prince

Mounted BSB

Mage

10 Archers

10 Archers

14 Phoenix Guard

15 White Lions

5 Dragon Princes

5 Dragon Princes

Lion Chariot

6 Shadow Warriors

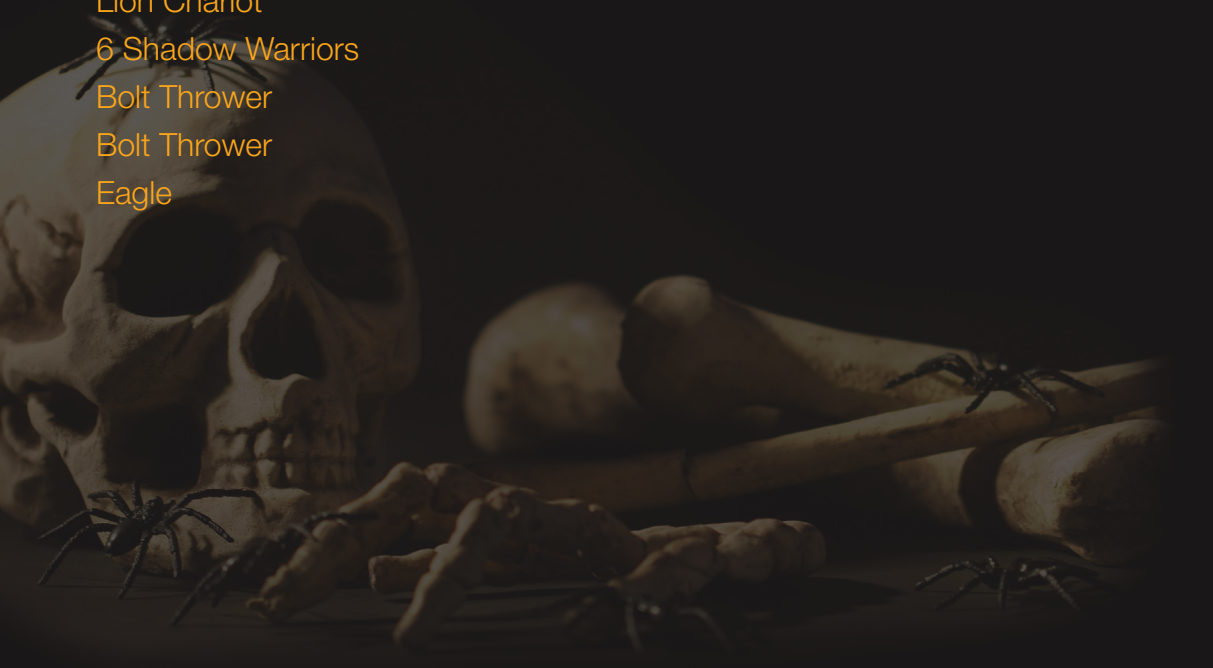
Bolt Thrower

Bolt Thrower

Eagle

So a very balanced list then. I was waiting for the Dragon/Archmage to appear from his bag, but it never happened. I could pretty much tell that it wasn't going to go well for him from the very beginning, as the majority of his troops with staying power had only one attack each and minimal ranks, making them very manageable for undead infantry. This was only made worse by his lack of magic. The amount of shooting on offer was not worrying, and could even be considered a waste of points against my army. The Dragon Princes were the primary concern, with their hitting power and potential for the Champions to carry magic items, doubly so with the BSB.

Deployment: I deployed fairly centrally, with the Wight King-led Black Knights on the right flank ready to sweep through the woods if necessary, and the Varghulf and Wraiths on the left. I put the Zombies opposite the White Lions, as with one attack each, they would take a while to get through them. He put both Dragon Prince units on his right flank, the archers in the centre and his two elite infantry units on his left, with the White Lions eyeing the wood.



High Elves Turn 1:

Mick advanced, his magic did nothing, the Bolt Throwers shot some Grave Guard, and the Archers and Shadow Warriors shot some Ghouls.

Vampire Counts Turn 1:

Some shuffling was done. The Wraiths wandered into the wood and the Banshee hurled abuse at the nearest unit of Dragon Princes; they tried not to make eye contact and ignored the crazy ghost woman. Some more Ghouls turned up, and the Grave Guard were replenished.

High Elves Turn 2:

The BSB-led unit of Dragon Princes crept into the Wraith wood, while the Eagle sat in front of the Varghulf and started teasing him about his ginormous hair. Everyone else advanced some more, the White Lions entered the wood. The Mage did nothing again.

Vampire Counts Turn 2:

More shuffling. The Wight King left the Knights and joined the central Ghoul unit. The Varghulf turned his back on the obnoxious Eagle and went the other way to threaten the centre. The Banshee then turned her attention to the other unit of Dragon princes who were left aghast by her ranting and raving, to the extent that four of them fell over (I suspected the BSB carried the Battle Banner, and thus was not keen for the Wraiths to engage them). More Ghouls were raised.

High Elves Turn 3:

The central unit of Dragon Princes and the Chariot charged the Wight King's Ghoul unit, the Phoenix Guard

charged the Grave Guard and the White Lions charged the Zombies. Everyone passed all their psychology tests. The Eagle flew over the wood and continued taunting the Varghulf, who was starting to get a dangerous look in his eye. The Mage was still on strike. The Phoenix Guard and Prince bounced off the Grave Guard and ran away, the Dragon Princes and Chariot killed a grand total of three Ghouls and the White Lions chopped up some Zombies.

Vampire Counts Turn 3:

The Varghulf, unable to take any more of the Eagle's cruel jibes, charged and throttled the verbose avian, narrowly missing the BSB with the overrun. Ghouls were, again, raised. The Banshee finished off the last Dragon Prince and took a wound off the BSB with more viciously cutting remarks about men who wear long white robes and have floppy blond hair. The Dragon Princes in the centre fled from the Wight King and his Ghouls, while the Chariot held. More Zombies were felled like very soft, squidgy trees.

Result:

Minor win to the Vampire Counts. He had killed my Thrall, Zombies, Wolves and Knights while I got his Eagle, Dragon Princes, BSB, Mage, Archers and Bolt Throwers. He had more banners than me, and so the difference was somewhere in the region of 450VPs.

Conclusions:

Mick says he does not approve of tournament armies and the playstyle that generally goes with them, however I cannot understand why one would attend a tournament with an army that cannot compete in such an arena,

and then get frustrated when the obvious happens. I also do not consider a fluffy list to automatically mean weak. Simple High Elf Spearmen would have been a better choice than such an elite-heavy list, bringing much needed numbers and weight of attacks. The Prince would also have been better off with the Stubborn White Lions (and it'd be fluffier as well) to provide a really solid block.



Models by Dreadlegions

Game two

Declan's Skaven

Declan was a thoroughly pleasant fellow, with oodles of tournament experience and a huge Skaven army. This was my first proper outing against the new ratmen.

Warlord on War-litter
Plague Priest on Furnace
2 Engineers
22 Plague Monks
10 Storm Vermin with
Warpfire Thrower
20 Clanrats with Doomflayer
20 Clanrats with Doomflayer
21 Slaves
21 Slaves
21 Slaves
5 Giant Rats
5 Giant Rats
2x7 Censer Bearers
Warp Lightning Cannon
Doomwheel

Deployment:

My army took one look at the sea of brown opposite and decided to sit in a corner and sulk. The right hand corner in fact. All the vulnerable elites were nicely tucked away behind a hill. The central wood would (hopefully) neatly split Declan's army into manageable chunks. He deployed with all his good stuff opposite my army, no surprises there.

Skaven Turn 1:

The ratmen surged forwards at an alarming rate and some cheeky blighter zapped the Grave Guard. The Doomwheel zoomed around the wood. The Warp Lightning Cannon blew up some more Grave Guard and singed the Vampire Lord's immaculate hair. This would not go unpunished.

Vampire Counts Turn 1:

My Dire Wolves slipped through the infantry lines and made themselves look as alluring as possible to a large, smelly bunch of fly-

infested Plague Monks. Infantry creaked and shuffled. Ghouls were raised. And so forth.

Skaven Turn 2:

Spying the bait set for the Plague Monks, the jealous Doomwheel decided to drive through a wood and run them over first. He couldn't see them of course, but that doesn't matter because suspension of disbelief is integral to the Doomwheel, apparently in terms of rules as well as physics. And for some reason, it only takes D6 Strength 4 hits when it drives over a tree, unlike my Chaos Chariots which splinter into a thousand pieces. The Warlock hopped into a different unit of Clanrats. Then a Warlock Engineer fired the Doom Rocket at my Grave Guard and obliterated half the unit. The discrepancy in power between a 40k Rocket Launcher and a Chinese firework from Fantasy is quite amazing. I wish my Havoc Squads could kill ten guys in one shot. The Warp Lightning Cannon misfired and shot some Slaves. The Wolves

died horribly, the Doomwheel careened into the Grave Guard and the Plague Monks ran miles in a silly direction. Success... sort of...

Vampire Counts Turn 2:

Spying the flank of the enormous Plague Monk unit, the Wight King and his Ghouls overcame the shock of a tactic actually working and charged in. Grave Guard were raised frantically, just in time to get run over. Only, they didn't, as the Doomwheel fluffed spectacularly and ran away... through the Censer Bearers... and the Storm Vermin. Impact Hits were dealt. Storm Vermin panicked and fled, outpacing the Doomwheel!

Skaven Turn 3:

Declan's third turn opened with the funniest Warhammer moment in years; the Doomwheel failed to rally and proceeded to run over the same Storm Vermin unit again, wiping them out. Various painful-sounding spells were flung about, but the all-important

Wither was stopped at all costs. Plague Monks and Ghouls engaged in a jovial shoving and gassing match.

Vampire Counts Turn 3:

The Vampire Counts elites were still sat around playing Mah Jong behind a hill, mainly to avoid the Warfire Thrower. Combats continued without conclusions.

Skaven Turn 4:

The Doomwheel rallied, failed its restraining test and shot the Warp Lightning Cannon. Sadly it didn't do any damage, but it had me in fits. The Cannon itself then misfired, but nothing untoward occurred. The Skaven Warlord and his bunch of hairy hoodlums charged the Zombies, who reacted with passive resistance. The Grave Guard were engaged by the Clanrats. The Slaves and Doomflayer on the extreme left flank attempted to charge the Ghouls guarding said flank but uniformly failed their fear tests.

Vampire Counts Turn 4:

The Wraiths and Black Knights decided now was the time, and emerged from behind their hill, positioning themselves for maximum rat-abuse next to the Slaves and Warlord's Clanrat unit. The Vampire Lord miscast and ended the magic phase prematurely, leaving the Grave Guard dangerously depleted. They then disappeared. Oh dear. By this point, I had killed sufficient Plague Monks for the Furnace to be in base contact, and the Plague Priest and wrecker ball accounted for a lot of Ghouls. The Wight King swung at the Priest, triggering his 3+ ward vs first wound taken.

Skaven Turn 5:

The Doomwheel failed its restraining test again, misfired

and drove off the board. The Clanrats on the left now flank charged the Wight King's Ghouls. Several Ghouls were gassed, the Wight King took off the Priest's head with an expertly-placed Killing Blow but subsequently he and his unit vanished. The Warlord remained unimpressed by the Zombies' passive resistance and he and his hairy chums stabbed them all. The Clanrats on the extreme left flank again failed their fear tests to charge.

Vampire Counts Turn 5: The Wraiths charged the Warlord (who had been conspicuously wielding a non-magical great weapon) and the Black Knights charged the Slaves. In true



Models by Redarmy27

Skaven fashion, the Warlord and his mighty retinue ran away like girls. The Slaves died to the Black Knights, but their compulsory pursuit left their flank open to enfilading fire from the Warp Lightning Cannon. The Vampire Lord and his bunker charged the Clanrats, who promptly fled.

Skaven Turn 6:

The Warlord, who ran a mile, managed to compose himself and rally. The Warp Lightning Cannon misfired and exploded. The Clanrats rally. The prodigal Doomwheel returns. Much rejoicing is had (not really).

Vampire Counts Turn 6:

Both Vampires suddenly rush out of the bunker and begin spamming Raise Dead in an effort to contest table quarters and succeed in contesting the left quarter.

Result:

Draw. Declan got the Grave Guard, the Wight King, one unit of Ghouls and the Wolves, I got his Plague Priest, half the Plague Monks, the Storm Vermin, Censer Bearers, Warp Lightning Cannon and two units of Slaves. The table quarters were all contested, and he got more banners.

Conclusions:

Skaven appear to be both better and more fun than before. Declan played a great game and it was very close indeed. I think the only mistake he made was to leave the Furnace unit open to baiting, it would have been much nastier had it hit home as intended. We agreed that I should have moved the Wight King to the Grave Guard, as he was largely unnecessary in the Ghoul flankers.

game three

alex's vampire counts

A very Wolf-heavy VC army, Alex's list was certainly unusual. This promised a good game, and he did not disappoint.

Vampire Lord
Vampire
Vampire
Necromancer
Corpse Cart
10 Skeletons
10 Skeletons
18 Ghouls
10 Ghouls
6 Wolves
6 Wolves
6 Wolves
6 Wolves
5 Fell Bats
5 Black Knights
5 Blood Knights

Deployment:

I deployed to the right of centre (like a Japanese politician) and Alex deployed centrally, with the Wolves forming a long screen.

Alex Turn 1:

The Wolves pushed forwards fast and everything else advanced behind them. Some Ghouls and Skeletons were raised.

My Turn 1:

Some shuffling was done, and Ghouls were raised. The Knights and Wraiths moved out onto the flank and the Banshee vented her PMT fury on some Wolves, leaving one lone wretch to run home, yelping in terror.

Alex Turn 2:

The curtain of Wolves and Bats parted to reveal a unit of Blood Knights heading straight for the Grave Guard. Everything else moved up and was raised a bit. Some Wolves charged the Zombies, who won by using

their ancient technique, 'The Way of Standing There in Ranks and Moaning'.

My Turn 2:

Pity the Dire Wolf, for its entire existence is nothing more than a series of brutal deaths at unusual angles. Take heart though, as none of these deaths are in vain (well, not for my Wolves anyway). My lone unit of Wolves loped through my units and interposed themselves between the Blood Knights and Grave Guard. I was reasonably certain that the Grave Guard could take it, but would rather have had the vampire knights bounce off the good old Drakenhof and get my points worth.

Alex Turn 3:

Assuming of course that Alex did not have the dreaded 10pt Flaming Attacks banner. Which my Dire Wolves reliably informed me he did not. Even if he had done, I was confident the Ghouls could have held with the

Helm and incoming support in the following turn. Only, he had the dreaded Hatred Banner. Hm. The Blood Knights rode roughshod over the Wolves and crashed into the Ghouls, their flank wide open to the Black Knights. For some reason, more Dire Wolves rushed to certain death in the face of the Zombies' 'Way of Standing There in Ranks and Moaning' technique. Then something happened that I did not expect. The Vampire Lord flew over and interposed himself between the impending flank charge of my Black Knights and his Blood Knights. Either he was a looney or he was a double hard bar-steward. Or possibly both. The Bats then flew to block the Black Knights.

Me Turn 3:

Figuring I had to hold the flying Lord in place until I could work out a better way of killing him, I sent the Varghulf in to 'have a word'. The Black Knights obligingly charged the Fell Bats and my Ghouls decided that those other blue Ghouls over there had 'looked at 'em funny, like' (this is Watford after all) and charged them. The Blood Knights took two wounds off the Wight King, killed some Ghouls and then got stuck. The Zombies struck down wave after wave of Wolves (ok, that's a lie, they just stood there) my Ghouls bounced off his Ghouls, the Varghulf wounded the flying Lord and then took three wounds in return due to some appalling Regen rolls and I failed epically by not resolving the Black Knights' combat first. Had I done so, they could have joined the Varghulf in black-bagging the winged Vampire Lord, as they wiped out the Bats completely. Arse.

Alex Turn 4:

Alex's Black Knights charged their Samurai counterparts in the flank and some more shuffling and raising was done. In truth I have utterly lost track of the magic phases, and honestly it doesn't really matter; stuff got raised, no dirty spells got through apart from his Ghouls Dancing into my Grave Guard, which I allowed. His Black Knights used someone else's Weapon Skill to kill two of my Black Knights, who still stabbed the

Vampire Lord twice. He died. Huzzah. Then he came back to life in the rear Skeleton unit. Carstein Ring? Hah, cheating I say, cheating. The Blood Knights, bereft of their hatred and lance bonuses, bounced off the Ghoul Regen fortress and were vapourised to a single knight.

My Turn 4:

Deciding he hadn't had enough of the Vampire Lord, my Varghulf charged him (he was still visible, in range and on one wound). He failed spectacularly and was sent back to hell, muttering about loaded dice. My Wraiths charged the Black Knights in the rear, used someone else's Weapon Skill to hit them lots and made them disappear. The last Blood Knight vanished in a puff of smoke and some Ghouls punched each other, probably outside the pub at closing time. The mighty Zombies, now victorious after their epic battle, spent the remaining turns of the game very slowly trying to make it into the next table quarter.

Alex Turn 5:

Things were looking bad for Alex, he was rapidly running out of options by this point. All his Vampires retreated into his rearmost unit and raised things. General Ghoul jobbery continued.

My Turn 5:

The Black Knights charged the flank of the Ghouls in combat with the Grave Guard, gave them all ASBOs and sent them back to their mummies. My Ghouls lost the Ghoul-fight (its like a girlfriend, only it isn't sexy at all) and disappeared. Everyone else just shuffled about and started complaining idly to each other about the late release of 'Return to Ostagar' on PS3.

Alex Turn 6:

Alex's Ghouls charged my Knights, crumbling all but one.

My Turn 6:

My Grave Guard charged his (now visible) Ghouls and I raised some Knights back. And that, as they say, was it.

Result:

Solid Victory to me. I got his Blood Knights, Black Knights, all his Wolves and Bats and one unit of Ghouls, he got my Varghulf, one unit of Ghouls, my Wolves and half points for the Wight King. All quarters were contested and I had more banners.

Conclusions:

Alex was still new to Vampires, but was clearly a competent player. I think he had far too many Wolves, presumably due to fear of the Blood Knights getting baited; two units

of 5 (or maybe 2 Dragon Traps) should have sufficed. As it happened, they were baited by my wolves anyway, so perhaps some re-thinking is in order there. A Varghulf could make a good blocker for them. I totally fluffed the Black Knights combo charge into the Lord, although with hindsight this may have been a good thing; had the Lord returned to life in Alex's turn, he would have had more chance to get back into the game. The Carstein Ring has potential if the Lord were to be played more aggressively. The Skeletons achieved very little, I think he may have been better off trading both units of them for Grave Guard, and focusing his raising powers on the Ghouls, allowing his infantry to push forward earlier in the game and get more out of the two Vampire heroes.

The Corpse Cart also didn't make its presence felt, and the Lodestone could have been helpful for the knights. We agreed a Battle Standard would also have benefited him. Overall I think his army suffered from mismatched choices, the Blood Knights deciding the pace of his army too much, rushing in ahead of time and allowing me to fight his force piecemeal.

Thoughts on my army:

It was nice to have The Drakenhof Banner for a change, it really is a monster, plus I love Wight Kings. I'm really starting to think my tournament-build Lord should play a more active role, he has played the casting-hiding game very successfully for a long time, but I think it's time for something new. It's also not very Samurai, and that's something I want to rectify. Some raw combat ability could be very handy, and I was quite taken with the Flying Horror/Carstein Ring combo.

It would also help me get more victory points, as, though I didn't lose any games I still placed lower than some people who had lost a game but had bigger wins, due to the scoring system which differed to the GT (where wins are higher priority than VP margins).

Having the Helm on a Hero Vamp is a definite downgrade but is still decent, I may adopt this in future. The Grave Guard were, as always, the stars of the show.

Larger starting size for Ghouls would be nice, though not necessarily practical.

The compulsory overrun/pursuit from the Royal Banner of Strigos is beginning to irritate me; it has cost me my knights on several occasions recently, and almost did in this tournament too. I will likely switch to

the Banner of the Barrows for less hitting power but more control, plus better results in subsequent turns (not that they are the sort of unit that wants protracted combats, but it's still a bonus of sorts)





Blood on a Budget
by Malisteen

Introduction:

Welcome to the second part of Blood on a Budget, an ongoing series detailing the process of collecting, painting, and playing with a new Vampire Counts army. Each issue I have a budget of \$60(US) to purchase additions to the army, and for the initial article I had an extra \$100 to get the army started. If I stay under budget I can use the extra funds on the following month's article. The budget only covers the Army itself - core rulebooks and painting and modelling supplies are not included in the budget.

Collection:

Last month I started my collection off with the Vampire Counts Army book, a battalion box, a vampire, and an extra box of ghouls, leaving me with \$8 left over from my initial budget. Added to my \$60 per issue budget, that gives me \$68 dollars to work with this month. So what should I add?

In my games so far, there has been one recurring lesson - and that's that I don't have enough speed in my army. With everything moving at infantry speed, and only one vampire to keep everything marching, I have difficulty reaching enemy ranged units in the far corners of the board, and faster enemies have pretty easily out-manoeuvred me.

Taking these lessons to heart, I've decided to pick up a box of dire wolves and a Varghulf. Together, this will give me a fast flanking force that can hunt war machines or threaten with flank charges. As an added bonus, both the Dire Wolves and Varghulf are pretty cheap, at only \$25 each. The Varghulf in particular is a good deal - similar models in other armies frequently cost as much as \$40.



So that's \$50 spent so far, leaving me with \$18. For a while I thought about adding another character. Maybe a Wight King battle standard? Maybe another Vampire hero? But there was another concern, something everyone who plays Warhammer has to deal with sooner or later, a new edition of the Core Rules.

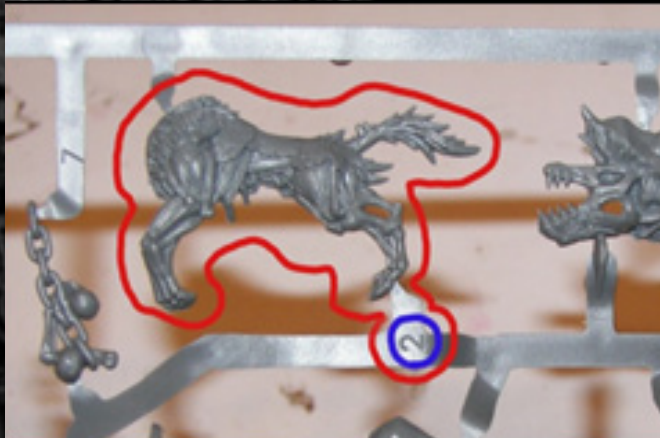
Yes, the 8th edition of the Warhammer Fantasy Battle Game core rulebook is upon us. By the time you read this, the secrets of the new edition will have already been revealed to you, but at the time of writing all I have to go on is a swirl of crazy rumors on the internet. Saving the remaining \$18 will give me an extra reserve to adapt to the new rules next time.

Pro Tip: Don't Panic!

If this is your first experience of a new edition change, it may seem a little scary. After all, you're sinking a lot of money into the hobby, and trying to build a strong army, and you don't want all your hard work to go up in a puff of smoke. The important thing is not to panic. The hobby is always changing and growing, and new rules are part of that. There might be some adjusting to do, but adapting to a new rule set is rarely as hard as it seems, and you'll find yourself going back over your army book, reconsidering units you might once have overlooked. Sure, you don't want to buy a lot of stuff right before a new edition, but that just means you'll have more funds to get all the stuff you'll want when the new book is out.

Assembling the Dire Wolves

Assembly of the Dire Wolves was pretty straight forward, but there are some things to look out for. The dire wolf bodies and heads are not interchangeable. There are numbers on the sprue next to each piece, to tell you which pieces go together. Be careful not to mix them up when removing the pieces from the sprue.



The rib cage pieces can go with any wolf, but the the left and right pieces are not interchangeable. If you look closely at the sprues you'll see a little 'R' next to the right pieces and a little 'L' next to the left pieces. Be careful not to mix them up when removing them from the sprues



Be sure to file and trim each piece before assembly, removing any mold lines, especially if you make extensive use of washes and dry-brushing like I do. These painting methods are fast and easy, and look good on undead models, but they also tend to accentuate mold lines - even ones that were hard to see before the model was painted.

Once that's done, the first step of assembling the dire wolves is to glue the sections of rib cage to the bodies, being careful to glue right rib sections to right sides of the bodies and left rib sections to left sides of the bodies. It is much easier to fit these pieces together now then it is to assemble the separate halves of the bodies and then try to glue the rib cages into them. From there, the rest of the assembly is really self-explanatory.



The rib cages are the only tricky bit in assembling the dire wolves. You want them to look like this.

Once the wolves are assembled, I applied some tacky hobby glue on the bases and dipped them in modelling sand. Some people like to do basing afterwards, but since I like to paint the sand on my bases, I like to prime the sand with the rest of the model.



When the glue is dry, it's off to the priming bat for a couple thin coats of black spray primer. The priming bat - a stick with double sided tape wrapped around it - makes it easy to spray several models at a time.



Assembling the Varghulf

The Varghulf is also pretty easy to assemble. I found that mine held together well with just glue, so I didn't bother with pinning. There were some gaps around where the arms fit into the shoulder, so I had to do some filling with green stuff. I skipped gap filling on the Dire Wolves, but the Varghulf is a rare choice, and a vampire. It deserves the extra effort. That said, in retrospect I really should have done the gap filling for the dire wolves, too.



Here's one of those painful gaps. It's a little hard to see in this picture of the bare metal, but it would be impossible to miss in the finished painted model.

If you haven't filled gaps before, it's not as difficult as it may seem. You'll need some yellow/blue milliput, also known as Green Stuff. I get mine from GW, but you can get it cheaper in bulk on the internet. You'll also need a sculpting tool - you'll want one with a tiny spoon shape on one side, and a wedge or knife shape on the other. GW makes one like this, but you can get similar at any arts & crafts store. You'll also want some water to keep your

hands and tools damp so the putty doesn't stick to them instead of the model. Some Vaseline can also be a good idea, for the same reason



Start by cutting off a very small section of the blue & yellow putty ribbon. You only need a tiny amount - maybe the size of a pea at the most. With damp fingers, knead the putty together until it turns a uniform green throughout. Keep kneading, dampening your fingers as necessary, until the putty becomes sticky. Then it between your fingers into a string shape. Break off a section of the string and place it over the gap you're filling.



Use the spoon shape on your modelling tool to spread the putty over the gap, shaping it to the area around it. Then use the knife side to texture it to match the surrounding detail as necessary. This isn't too hard for fur, basically just put lines in it until it looks right.



You might need to switch to a hobby knife instead of your modelling tool if the blade on your tool isn't sharp enough. When the gaps are filled, leave the model for 24 hours to allow the putty to fully dry and harden.

Once you're done, glue your basing material down and prime the model, just as with the dire wolves.

Painting the Dire Wolves

I painted the dire wolves using the same method that I used on the zombies and ghouls last time, though I used Gryphon Sepia to shade the skin this time. It was a little close to my bone colors, so it needed an extra coat of Sepia at the end to get the effect I wanted.

As with the ghouls and zombies, there are a lot of paint applications, but all of the steps are base coats, over-brushes, dry-brushes, or washes, so they're all pretty easy to do, and the final effect looks nice without requiring very much skill.

Step by Step

Skin and Bones

Paint the skin sections Dhenneb Stone, then wash the skin with Gryphon Sepia. Paint the bones Khemri Brown. Afterwards, dry-brush both the skin and bones with Dhenneb Stone.



Flesh and Fur

Paint exposed muscle & organs with Mechrite Red, then dry-brush with Blood Red. Touch up fur sections with chaos black if necessary, then over-brush with Fortress Grey.



Details and Shading

Over-brush the metal bits chainmail, paint the cloth bits Calthan Brown, and then wash the entire model with watered down Devlan Mud.



Finishing Touches

Dry-brush bone sections Dhenneb Stone, wash skin sections with Gryphon Sepia, paint eyes skull white. If you want, paint on some blood spatter with Mechrite Red and then Blood Red.



Base and Spray

Paint the base with watered down Chordite Granite, then drybrush with Graveyard Earth. Glue patches of static grass to the base. Spray with purity seal, and paint 'Ardcoat onto the gory bits. Done!



Painting the Varghulf

The Varghulf is a rare choice, and a large monster, and a vampire, so it clearly deserves some extra attention when you're painting it. I wanted the Varghulf to fit visually with my flanking force, so I've used basically the same paint scheme as the dire wolves themselves. Of course, I lavished some extra attention on it in the process - with extra layers of highlights and shading. I also wanted to have some visual link between the Varghulf and my ghouls, so I used Baal Red instead of Gryphon Sepia to tone its wing membranes, the same as I used for the skin on my ghoul unit.

The skin tones got the bulk of the additional attention. I started with a base coat of Dheneb Stone, washed with Gryphon Sepia for the skin and Baal Red for the wing membrane, then highlighted with Dheneb Stone again.

Next I gave the skin and wings a wash of watered down Devlan Mud. This was followed by another thin wash of Gryphon Sepia over the skin, and another highlight of watered down Dheneb Stone. Then I carefully applied a watered down Leviathan Purple wash, just to the recesses of the skin, and the areas where the skin and wing membranes meet.

The fur and eyes also got a little more attention. For the fur I applied a dry-brush of a 50/50 mix of Fortress Grey and Astronomican Grey after the usual Battle-fortress Grey over-brush. Then I gave the fur a wash of Badab Black. The eyes were painted with a white undercoat, then Blazing Orange and finally Sunburst Yellow.



Gryphon Sepia was used to tone the skin, and Baal Red was used on the wing membranes. Both used Dheneb Stone as a base coat and a highlight.



Leviathan Purple Wash was painted into the folds of the skin, and the areas where the wing membranes and skin meet, adding depth and color to the skin tones.



The finished Varghulf, ready to lead my dire wolves on a bloody hunt for, er, blood.

You could achieve a similar overall look for the Varghulf using just the methods I used for the dire wolves, but going all out for a centerpiece model like this is really worth the effort. That said, hand painted highlights and shading is much more difficult than simple dry-brushes and washes, and much more time consuming. Look for the Dark Sheep's amazing painting guides for tips on how to use more advanced techniques.

Conclusion ting the Varghulf

Unfortunately, with the new edition waiting right around the corner, none of my opponents were willing to play a game with the current rules to let me try out my new models!

As such, I don't have any battle reports or game

summaries to write about, or any new lessons to give me an idea of what to get next.

The addition of the Varghulf and Dire Wolves will take the army up to 1,000 points, so I'll be ready to play some demo games of 8th edition when my local store gets the book.

I'll use those demo games to plan out what to add to my army to get it working with the 8th edition rules. With extra games, extra money saved, and a new edition to explore, I should have a lot to talk about next time. See you then.



mantic

"Our wrath shall be terrible and beautiful to behold. It is time that the lesser races learned to fear the Elves once more."

Etherrar Bladedancer, on the eve of the Battle of Dalaruth Fields

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the art of magic

Written by Onikaigo

8th edition magic combinations

The tome slams on the ancient writing desk with a deafening crash, scattering papers and quill wildly. The pale blue eyes of Onikaigo look down into his students, finding exhaustion and weakness in his human acolytes.

"Fools! The winds of Magic have changed. You cannot think to continue treating the Winds the same and expect to survive. I will throw your entrails in the moat and erase your names from history if you do not heed me!"

A snort of disgust, and a quick whaler of his black robes and Onikaigo is across the room and indicating a map of the Empire with the different winds of Magic mapped out in bright, corresponding colors.

"Hysh, Chamon, Ghyran, Azyr, Ulgu, Shyish, Aqshy, Ghur. These are the winds of Magic, and they have changed greatly. In the past we could draw from these winds

without fear, confident in our strength; but these winds have waned. Now we can no longer count our power in quantities, but only on what we can Channel from the winds through force of will alone. Attention!"

The Book has finally landed, and this article is written off of the base assumption that you have the book to understand the new magic rules. I'm simply going to enlighten my acolytes as to how to utilize the new spells to their advantage.

So, to begin!

The new spell type 'Augment' and spell type 'Hex' both stack. This means that Augments can stack with other Augments, and Hexes can stack with other Hexes. This means that even our very sub par Zombies, with the proper spell support, can become I10, WS10, ASF, re-rolling Magical attacks, +1 to all to hit rolls....and this is without a Banner! And only combining two magic Lores as well, that of Metal and Light.

Or, if you want to make your opponent pay for very, very sad and sorry troops, you can lower your opposing enemies statline to sad, sad states. For instance: The Lore of Shadows has 3 different hexes. If you combine them, and if you power up the signature spell, your opponents characteristics drop drastically. (WS, BS, I, M, S, T reduced by D3) This would make humans far, far below the level of our skeletons or Ghouls, and this is all from one Lore!

The new Lores are also quite a boon to us. Many of the buffs and hexes work fantastically for us, especially those of the Lores of Shadows and Death. Doom and Darkness especially makes all the Leadership tests we incur, along with the Banshee's Scream, something which work well in our favour. This is something which we have easy access to.

Let's not also forget the fact we have a very potent Lore ourselves, with spells that can be recast and possibly the best spell in the game; Vanhel's Danse Macabre. We can have it multiple times if we wish by choosing Necromancers (any chosen spells do not count for duplicating spells), so if one fails to cast, it's simply onto the next! Our Necros are cheap enough to have a few of them to keep our troops moving and healed if necessary, so don't be afraid to use them.

So, we're going to look at some ideas for combinations, specifically built to help Augment our troops, decimate our opposing troops, or turn our Vampires into mobile artillery pieces, or into one man wrecking crews.

Decimation:

Lore of Shadows;

Melkoth's Mystifying Miasma (5+-10+)

The Enfeebling Foe(10+-13+)

The Withering(13+-16+)

If all three spells land on a single unit, Strenth and Toughness are reduced by D3, and you get to choose WS, BS, I, or M to reduce by D3. For a +5 to cast on the Signature spell, you can reduce all those stats by D3. This can reduce an Empire Greatsword to stats lower than a Zombie!

You could also throw on more Hexes from other Lore's for -1 to hit your troops, making them need 6's by default. With all these negates for at least one turn, until your opponent has an option to dispel them, that unit is nothing to fear.

Decimation:

Lore of Metal;

Enchanted Blades of Aiban (9+-12+)

Lore of Light;

The Speed of Light (8+-16+)

--If possible,

Birona's Timewarp (12+-24+)

If you land the first two spells on a single friendly unit, you can have a set of Zombies doing wonderful things. Their stat line would be boosted to I10, WS10. They would not have Armor Piercing, and +1 to hit on all close combat rolls. This would be some very, very cheap, very very scary zombies. If you can get off Spell 6, all Zombies get another Attack and have the ASF rule.

Who said Zombies are useless?

Extended Covering Fire:

Lore of Death;

Purple Sun of Xereus (15+-25+)

Any other lore;

Direct Damage Spells

The Lore of Death has a bonus, as do all the Magical Lore. For every unsaved wound that the Lore of Death causes, you gain another Power Dice on a roll of a 5+. 1/3'rd of your kills give you more power, as long as you don't exceed 12 power dice. So, the plan is simple. Blow stuff up with your lore of Choice, then use the Purple Sun to gain your powerdice back. Think of each of your Wizards as a Cannon of sorts, and make sure to position them where they can always find good targets of opportunity.



Model by Death Stalker

Terror in the Night:

Lore of Beasts

Transformation of Kadon (16+-20+)

Special Requirement: Another wizard.

Once you're in Beast form, have another wizard cast Augment spells on you. Or, Hex your opponents to make you even more potent. Not like a red Dragon needs much more combat ability, but +3 Attacks is nothing to laugh at.

Anti Armour

Lore of Metal;

Any direct damage from the Lore of Metal Alternately;

Lore of Metal (7+-10+)

Enchanted Blades of Aiban (9+-12+)

The Lore of Metal is custom tailored to take out Enemy Armor, with each spell that wounds disallowing Armor Saves against them! A unit of Knights can find themselves cut down ruthlessly before they can charge, and a heavily armored Character can find himself cooking inside his own armor. Spell 1 is particularly interesting, as you can target a specific model to permanently lose 1 from their armor save, making your troops more effective against them.

There are opposing schools of thought to the 'Diverse' magic phase that is suggested here. Magic is inherently more risky, and without the certainty of power dice it's not easy to count on the ability to get these Hex/Augments/Spells to successfully cast. But, the Magic phase is no longer ruled by Power Dice and spamming, it's ruled by diversity and a little bit of planning.

Vampires have a unique option as compared to 'Other' armies. We have Forbidden Lore, and our generic Characters are Wizards. We have access to more spells than almost any other Army, and we have the option to have an enormous amount of options. Forbidden Lore on Any vampire gives you 7 more options, and since all power dice (Minus specially generated) are pool dice, you can choose where to spend those dice that's most effective. Does your Shadow mage need the dice? Or your Vampire Mage? Or maybe you have a really good line for Burning Head from the lore of Fire, and you could use that as a target of Opportunity?

Diversity can make Vampires into a magical force that no other army list can match. So fear not, my undead companions! Eighth edition has changed many things, but Vampires shall soon rise again to their place of dominance

With a deep sigh like a death rattle, Onikaigo closes the tome he has been reading from, looking at the group of exhausted, terrified necromancers in the seats before him. Each one pale, dying almost; but each with an inhuman thirst for magic in their eyes. Each should retain this lesson, then.

Good.

"Dawn approaches. If you wish to survive the campaign, you will learn these lessons and learn them well. Either that, or you could fall in this campaign and still serve as one of my brainless tools; so return this coming night and show me your potential. Now, Go!"

The dismissal is curt, demanding, and without any semblance of question. The necromancers stand and leave the room almost in a run, unwilling to test the tried patience of their inhuman master.

The War Room closes behind them, and it's cold, cruel master is left alone to face the new dawn, and thousands more to come.

carpe noctem exclusive the reed pen of maatmeses

Written by The Pale Lady

Writing fiction is a very personal process, and for this reason no two writers will ever be able to truly emulate the work of the other. Between the creative thought that is so integral to fiction, the real-life experiences this creative thought is based on and the inspiration that develops as a result of these real-life experiences, everyone has an individual method of writing. This is regardless of the technical writing ability and free time necessary for successful pieces of fiction. Of course, there are some pointers that, when put into practice, can gradually increase the quality – and quantity – of an individual's writing.

The most important aspect of writing fiction, in my opinion, is inspiration. I place this somewhat loose, creative term over technical ability because inspiration is responsible for so many things. It is inspiration that leads a person to want to write in the first place, which is so important when you consider the time and effort necessary to craft a successful piece of fiction. It is inspiration that will separate your work from others and make

it unique to you alone. It is also inspiration that will give life and energy to your writing, because by its very definition inspiration is enthusing. Anyone else on Carpe Noctem could have written a novel-length fiction detailing Maatmeses and the Fall of Lahmia, but it was my python who inspired my interpretation of her character, my sense of morality that filled her with such a righteous sense of justice and the value I accorded those meaningful people in my life that enabled me to understand her anguish at the death of her people, her way of life and her bloodline.

A writer can find inspiration from all around them. Sometimes they will have to look hard to find it, other times it will jump out at them itself. It could take the form of a conversation, or a word used in a conversation, a conversation in a dream – or just a dream itself. In the examples just given, I found my snake an ideal source of inspiration. I likened her cold, calculating nature to Maatmeses, a connection drawn only from the fact that as a vampire, Maatmeses would be dead and cold, and as a reptile, so was my snake.

This relationship led me to research more into reptiles, specifically crocodiles, which I already knew books I had read were revered in ancient Egypt.

These sources of inspiration all fitted perfectly together in my head, and the creature that was Maatmeses was born. The point I am trying to make is that no matter a person's technical writing ability or the time they allocate to their writing, it is their experiences – the things they know – that shape what comes out of their pen (or at least, the keys they press!). Maatmeses' character could have been taken in a hundred different directions, fuelled by a hundred different sources of inspiration – she could have been made male, she could have despised her offspring, her sense of justice could have been warped or selfish from the very outset – but it is the particular elements of my life that I found relevant to her that crafted my own interpretation.

This is obviously applicable to more than just characters. Settings, dialogue, even down

the clothes on someone's back are all best written when they come from real life. It might sound a contradiction of terms, but the most powerful and memorable fiction really is based on real life (or unlifel!).

I hope this short article has been of some use to the readers of the Invocation, even if it has influenced only one of you. Happy writing!

TPL

Quatar, city of the jackal

an in-depth tour of an ancient city

Written by Lord Marcus

Welcome to the first instalment of my series of articles on the Nehekharan city of Quatar. This first article will focus on giving the reader a detailed description of the city itself, and its many and various wonders.

The Colonnade of Dusk

The western approaches to Quatar are formed of twenty massive pillars of sandstone, carved individually by a score of the finest sculptors and a contingent of the cities priesthood with images of D'jaf in his facet as the royal guardian to the afterlife. These monumental achievements in masonry are dwarfed by that which they line, the Road of the Twilight Sun.

The Road, once the primary trade route from the western desert into Quatar and eventually through the Valley of the Kings, was commissioned by the great and wise King Amon-Zar himself. The road spans the equal of four large trading carts of the time, with room to spare. Made from interlocking stones of an unknown origin the trade road runs from Quatar ten miles into the desert

sands before subsiding into a dirt track.

Currently most of the road lies under the rolling dunes which have covered the works of the ancients over the millennium since the treachery of he who shall remain nameless. It is only now, with the advent of the great

awakening and the formation of Quatar's royal council that work has begun to free the road from the shackles of the desert sands. The skeletal remains of thousands of slaves overseen by Ahket-Senef, the hierophant of Geheb, and his acolytes dig away at the dunes.



Day by day more and more of the ancient highway is being excavated. Recently a portion of one of the many carvings of the Nehekharan pantheon has been liberated from the crushing sands. Truly the gods favor the council for their undertaking.

Bastions of the Moon and the Sun

Despite its title, the Bastion of the Moon is not only the gatehouse, but the entire mile-spanning wall itself.

Twin to the Bastion of the Sun, the Bastion of the Moon sits as the western defensive wall of the city.

Created by unknown amounts of slaves at the order of the first king, Amon-Zar himself, the grand walls have three gates each (one greater and two lesser), along with eight defensive towers between the two. Additional reinforcement pillars adorn the otherwise austere inward sides of the walls, while upon the outward facings the entire span of the walls, excepting the grand gates, are carved with the deeds of the royal bloodline. These epics, akin to the sagas of the northmen

who worship Chaos, beginning with the living reign of Amon-Zar and ending abruptly around the time of the unspoken one's great death-spell.

In royal decree, the council proclaimed that the remaining empty space is to be filled with the deeds of the kings and princes that come after the great awakening. The Vizier Sehenesmet, entombed within the shell of a massive bone giant, has lent his physical strength to the task of the continued carvings, allowing the council to distribute its resources more thoroughly to other areas.

The great gates themselves, dedicated to D'jaf and Ptra as the patrons of the city, are made from white and black marble. Sigils of warding run down the height of the gates, accompanied by two smaller portals once used for the day-to-day traffic of Nehekhar's merchants.

The Gate of the Moon is also adorned with the epic facet of King Amon-Zar in his death state. Wrought in gold with a crown of bronze and rare silver, the visage of the King seems to scream out in rage at those who would seek to defile his city. The Gate of the Sun, in contrast, depicts a happy, living Amon-Zar looking as beneficent unto his subjects as he was in life.

The White Palace and the Holy Quarter

Despite both being magnificent in design and power the palace and Holy Quarter sit at opposite ends of Quatar. This placement lies directly at the heart of the city's purpose.

Quatar defends the western end of the Valley of the Kings, that length of sand-choked tombs that winds its way through the mountains and opens upon the sands of the eastern deserts which end at the shores of the former Sea of Dreams, now known as the Sour Sea. In fact, the city is built just within the mouth of the passage, which means its flanks rise to meet the mountains that line the valley.

The valley and indeed the mountains themselves are considered the domain of D'jaf himself and so the closer a person's property is to the mountainside, the more devoted he is considered. As the divine link between the city and the gods, the royal family and the priesthood inhabit the highest slopes that are reachable by man.

Both complexes are unique in that even though their massive buildings stretch to the sides of either bastion wall, both are built into the mountainside, a sight which awes all travellers who visit the city.

The Necropolis of Quatar

As the patron god of Quatar is the deity of death the city of the dead is of much importance to those who dwell therein.

The poor and merchant classes, as well as the lesser nobles of Quatar are buried in a shallow ravine just north of the city. This place of final rest is what the inhabitants knew of the necropolis, and indeed the rock face upon which the tombs of the poor look is embedded with a portal dedicated to the royal household, but this is just a façade, for the royal burial chambers are hidden deep in D'jaf's realm.

Within the palace grounds there is a store-room whose walls are embossed with the image of the royal jackal upon a field of dunes. The casual observer who stumbles onto this room would usually think nothing of it, as they are in the palace itself. What they don't know, is that if a keystone fitted with the royal seal is placed into the recessed eye of the jackal a cunning system of tumblers unlocks a door which is part of the wall itself. Beyond this portal is a hallway of blackest marble inlaid with streaks of gold which leads through a disorientating series of traps to a system of tomb chambers. All of these tomb chambers (of which there are several thousand, one created for each royal personage during his or her lifetime) lie deep within

the heart of the mountain, and all are deeply warded against invaders from above or below and contain specially enchanted ushabti to guard their occupants.

The same is reflected in the tombs of the priesthood, though theirs are much less elaborate, but still deeply warded.

Only one priest, and one prince have been denied the burials afforded them by their status. These individuals were switched, so that the priest guards the Chamber of Souls (the one chamber in the royal tombs given over to the kingly Caskets of Souls) and the prince guards the remains of the priests as the captain of the Jackal Guard. The deeds of these personages are to be told elsewhere, and do not bear repeating here. Suffice to say that the will of the king was enforced and that such arrangements were made.

That is it for this installment. Join me next time as I delve into mighty deeds of the kings and queens of Quatar.

the golden bat competition Summer 2010

sponsored by og games and mantic miniatures

Well it has come around so fast again, yes it is time to hold another Golden Bat Competition. For those of you with sharp eyes you may have noticed the title is missing the word "painting" like it used to, and for a very good reason.

As always we like to listen to our members at CN, and so following feedback we have decided to introduce a conversion category to the competition. But that doesn't mean we have less prizes for winners, oh no, in fact with the new support from Mantic Games, as well as OG Games this year we have more prizes than ever before!

So hopefully this year will be our most successful yet, and for those who love both converting and painting, there is the chance to try and go for Carpe Noctem's Golden Bat Masters Medal.

Entry Opens – 18 July 2010 at 2000 GMT

This is later than usual to allow for the release of Warhammer 8th edition. Two stickied threads will be created in the Dark Arts (painting and modelling) section of Carpe Noctem:

"The Golden Bat Competition – Summer 2010 - Painting",

"The Golden Bat Competition – Summer 2010 - Converting"

Any members wishing to enter will need to post a picture of their models in the relevant thread. Until the closing date, any of the following entries will be accepted:

- Any VC character (inc special characters), with or without appropriate mounts
- Upto 5 models from any infantry or cavalry unit, or Fell Bats. (Personally we

would recommend command where possible)

- Upto three bases of the following: Spirit Hoses, Bat Swarms.

One of the following: Corpse Cart, Black Coach, Varghulf, Zombie Dragon (on its own) or Zombie Giant. WIP shots are allowed and encouraged (and in the case of conversions mandatory – see below for photo entry rules). All final entries must state clearly in a title above the photos "Final Entry" For Painting entries you may have upto a maximum of three photographs from various angles.

For Conversion entries you must have three photographs showing the following:

Components – This should be a picture before the conversion showing the separate components.

WIP – This picture should be taken at any point during the conversion, ideally when around 50% complete

Finished – The finished model. In addition you may take another two pictures of the finished model from various angles.

Criteria:

- One entry per person per category. Members may enter a conversion, and then paint it to be in both categories if they wish.
- Model must be related to VC is somehow but does not have to come from the GW range. So models from Reaper etc are acceptable.
- Models entered in the Painting category must be fully painted and based.
- Models entered in the Conversion category must not be painted in any way, i.e you should be able to see the various



components and sculpting material where applicable.

- Conversions must consist of a least 50% change or sculpt to a model (i.e just swapping a head is not good enough.)
- Models must be painted and / or converted by the entrant (no claiming credit for other peoples work!)
- Models have to have been painted and / or converted his year, no entering models painted years ago.
- You cannot enter models entered in the previous Golden Bat Competition.

Entry Closes – 15 August 2010 at 2000GMT.
All photos marked “Final Entry” will then be put forward to voting.

Poll Opens – 15 August 2010 2200GMT.
A poll will be created with all the entrants displayed in the thread. Members will be able to vote for one entry only. Entrants may vote, but they may not vote for their own entry! (This will be checked on)

Poll Closes – 29 August 2010 2000GMT.
The poll will be closed and the winners announced!

The Prizes:

The following prizes are apply to both the Painting and Converting competitions, so if you enter both there are a lot of prizes up for grabs!

First Place

1x Mantic Vampire Lord on Pegasus (aka Hellsteed)
20x Undead Revenants (aka Grave Guard)
10x Ghouls and a £10.00 Voucher from OG Games

A coveted Golden Bat Competition Gold Medal for their profile. In the event that someone wins both categories, not only do they win both top prizes, but they instead receive the Golden Bat Competition Master Medal.
100 Zombie Points for their profile

Second Place

1x Mantic Vampire Lord on Pegasus (aka Hellsteed)
£5.00 Voucher from OG Games.

A Golden Bat Competition Silver Medal for their profile
50 Zombie Points for their profile

Third Place

10 Mantic Ghouls
A Golden Bat Competition Bronze Medal for their profile
25 Zombie Points

All the above Mantic prizes include free shipping, Mantic have generously extended this benefit, so order anything else at the same time as your prizes and they will benefit from free shipping too!

All Entrants

Everybody else who enters and is not one of the above winners will receive 10 zombie points.

book 1: a law unto her own

chap. 16-17 chapter 16:

ghosts of the past. ie -1152

The innards of the large, black tent were sparae. There was an ancient wooden rack, stuffed with crumbling scrolls, and a handful of braziers stood burning atop thin, bronze poles. They lit the makeshift room, their warm, orange light masking the cold, emptiness of the tent and creating the illusion of comfort. Of happiness.

Maatmeses had little need for material luxuries. She was a practical woman, and her quarters could not have reflected this more. Aside from that already mentioned, there were six more objects within the musty tent. They sat, ancient and festering as the scrolls themselves, at the far end of the room, and such was their impressive size that shadows, thick and impenetrable, covered at their bases, flinching only when the braziers' flames leapt too close.

The sarcophagi, for that is what the macabre constructs were, were worn through use. Grooves lined their surfaces like wrinkles to an aged faced, and cracks delved deep into the ancient stone. Their state of wear betrayed the unnatural nature of the beings that slept within; the sarcophagi were designed as safe-houses for the dead, not the nightly resting places that these six fulfilled. All across Nehekhara, and for many centuries now, the fortunate had upon their death been entombed within the sacred artefacts, their mortal remains consecrated, and safe, as much a part of the desert as the sands themselves.



The unfortunate had still been living when interred, the monstrous stone coffins their deathly prisons. It was a fate not unfamiliar to the most heinous of Lahmia's criminals, and one that Maatmeses had taken particular satisfaction in pronouncing. That much was evident from the glitter in her eyes.

Not all the sarcophagi were filled. Nebtawi stood several feet away, fully armoured, gleaming khopesh in hand. He moved gracefully, fluidly, stepping first left, then right, a silhouette of shadow and glowing bronze against the firelight. His blade cut fierce wounds into the air, decapitating and disembowelling his imaginary foes in equal measure. Save for the whisper of his weapon as it clove into the air, he practiced silently. Not so much as a breath of air escaped his lips.

It was late, and the day's march had been long, but he could not sleep.

Quicker than the desert wind he span round and lunged forward. His khopesh caught on the stomach of an invisible enemy and tore him open. His eyes flashed lurid yellow as an imagined torrent of blood sprayed his face, but the dark hunger inside of him was easily placated. He was a disciplined warrior, the kind of discipline that comes from years as captain of the city guard, and he knew the ways to control his urges. It was something that most infuriated him about their kind; the manner in which they surrendered so easily to the bloodlust, and only when he was most starving, and his expertise suffered, did he relish the prospect of feeding so readily.

And he was not starving. He had fed copiously as they had departed Numas, they all had, the soldiers of the Sun Cohort proving an excellent source of strong, rich blood. Thicker, more palpable and satisfying than anything Numas' pathetic city guard had been able to offer him, the Sun Cohort's life force had fed him strength, and vigour. He would not be hungry now for many weeks, perhaps months, so well had he dined.

It was almost a shame to have left them behind, although Nebtawi knew the promise of blood was no contest against the designs of their master. He had bidden them leave, and so they had, and now they travelled north.

His heel spun, sending a whisper of sand shooting out as he blade came scything round. It descended with a terrible purpose, strength enough to cleave a man in two hissing through the air.

He halted the blow a second before it hit the ground.

Anticipation flooded his aged mind, manifesting itself in the crease of his temples. The next few days would decide everything. A massive army, the likes of which Nehekhara had never seen, descended toward them. Contingents from the length and breadth of the Great Kingdom had amassed against them; archers from Zandri, legions of soldiers from great Khemri itself, even the remaining hosts of Mahrak and Quatar, much diminished though they were, lent weight to the living armies that opposed them. His eyes flashed again, this time betraying a different lust.

He would test his mettle against them all, and in doing so measure himself against the very best of Nehekhara. The Jackal Squadron of Mahrak especially would suffer his attentions; they had proved a most able foe during their conquest of the distant city, and he looked forward to slaying them. Aside from their battle prowess, they also had a debt to repay. Theirs were the forces that, amongst others, had caused so much devastation throughout Lahmia, all those decades ago. He had seen them, from a distance, as they tore down Lahmia's statues, desecrated her shrines, murdered her people so bitterly, and it was not something had he would let pass.

They would die to a man for their crimes, for if Maatmeses had taught him anything, it was that vengeance was absolute.

Skipping back, a movement that looked comical on such a visibly ancient man, Nebtawi froze. His control was awesome; every muscle was as still as stone itself, and he held the pose for several minutes. Locked in an almost meditative state, he allowed his mind to wander.

Maatmeses had been changed of late. She had left Numas a different woman. He put it down to stress. She had taken to spending copious amounts of time in the company of herself, dismissing the presence of the other Lahmians except when specifically bidden to endure them, and this coldness had even spread toward her children. He slowly slipped from the tension in his legs, bringing one up, and then out, seemingly unhindered by the heavy bronze armour that adorned him.

She not been cold as such, but there was a briskness to her voice, a distraction that played out in the back of her mind. He could see it in her eyes when they spoke, weighing on her, forever holding her attention.

He would be glad when the war was over, and they could return to Lahmia once more. Maatmeses was not the only one in need of some respite. Issa was desperately unwell; Odji, Ptoleme and he had discussed the matter at length. The vampire stalked their ranks, his eyes smouldering in a permanent state of rage. Spittle flourished about the corners of his lips, and if caught unawares, he would start as though from a dream. He was disconcerting to be around, something that Nebtawi never thought he would hear himself say about one of his brethren. They were all tied together, a single force, bound by blood, and that he could feel uncomfortable around one of their own was not a welcome admonition.

The man had been through a lot. Far more than any man had right to be, especially in losing Eshe. She had been his world, the second of two forces that, along with his work in Lahmia's courts, had shaped him. Guided him. Made him who he is.

Losing both aspects so suddenly and dramatically had taken its toll on the vampire. He brought his leg slowly down, and with a shudder that shook his entire body, walked slowly toward his sarcophagus. Whether his brother-in-blood would ever recover or not, only time would tell. In the meantime, he would try again to sleep. He had been an old man when turned, and despite his immortality, there were certain pains, arthritic flares and aching bones, the ghosts of which haunted his limbs still. Sleep would abate them.

With barely a grunt, he slid the grey stone of his sarcophagus' lid aside, and descended into the cool, dark depths within.

Within the confines of her own ancient sarcophagus, Maatmeses stirred. Moans tumbled erratically from her troubled lips, trapped within her tomb of stone, as the vampire slept fitfully. The gift of her blood, of nightmares and memories and vengeance, swept unchained through her head, reviving scenes she had long since abolished from her thought, and they plagued her as an illness does a mortal.

The pen scratched out one last word on the long decree, before falling to the table. Made of the finest papyrus, the scroll would last for an age. Long enough, at least, for its author to transcribe it to stone tablet, when time had all but taken its toll on the piece of parchment. Nearly the entire scroll was covered in small black scrawling, scribbles of black ink detailing some petty crime and the according punishment. At the end, signed and officialised, was written the name of the dignitary responsible. She would not usually handle such minor offences personally, but one of her judges had been uncharacteristically absent this day, and so she had undertaken the task herself.

'High Justice Maatmeses.'

Sighing, the High Justice of Lahmia reached over and picked up a long piece of bone. It was gleaming white, and had been smoothed down so that it resembled little more than a stick. A morbid, polished stick, but a stick nonetheless. She diligently wrapped the scroll around the tool and, leaning back, stashed it in a holding in the wall. It had been a long day. She wanted nothing more than to retreat to her chambers and sleep the night away. Her slaves would have prepared her dinner, but the prospect of food did not appeal to her. The thought of bread or fish did nothing to entice her, for her appetite had suffered recently, diminishing in the face of growing anxieties.

She had been most concerned of late.

Kheruef and Istnofret had taken to spending far too much time around each other. It would not have concerned her overly, except that they met in secrecy. Such conditions were condemning, why else should the two resort to hiding their company together, unless to conceal their guilty acts?

She felt a fury rising up inside of her, blood rushing to her face in an angry flush. Kheruef was married! The union was consecrated, lawfully binding, to break his vows, and in doing so, the vows of his wife, was criminal of the worst kind. Once she could prove their treachery.

Istnofret should know better! Were there no bounds to the audacity of the young girl? She whored herself out on a weekly basis to the man, creeping into his quarters when the coast was clear to indulge in her lustful acts of betrayal.

Maatmeses did not look kindly on such atrocities, especially not when they encroached on marriage. Something glinted in the corner of her eye, and she smeared it away. Marriage was lawful! Lawfully binding! In both her eyes, and in the eyes of the gods themselves. The ruination of its sanctity was... wrong!

Her face like stone, weathered and cracked, Maatmeses rose from her chair. The white robes of office that hung from clasps at her shoulders, and slid down to her feet, were creased from where she had been sitting for hours on end. She stashed a second scroll from the table carefully into her golden-bronze belt and made for the door.

No, it mattered not whether Istnofret had tempted Kheruef, with the promise of her soft flesh, or whether he, that treacherous, untrustworthy serpent, had ensnared her, using his rank and experience to subjugate her naïve little mind.

They were both to blame, and they would both suffer, in the end. None were exempt in the eyes of the law, except perhaps Queen Neferatem herself.

It was getting cold. She could feel the heat as it left the air, turning to chill even as the sun sank below the world's edge. The deserts were as cold by night as they were hot

by day. Something to do with the clouds, or lack of them, she thought vaguely. It had been an age since she had studied such things.

There came a sharp knock at the door.

"Enter," she said. It was Eshe.

"Where have you been this day, Eshe? I was called in to cover for your unexplained absence at midday. I understand that you are newly arrived to the post, but this is unacceptable behaviour." The judge looked breathless, colour stained her cheeks and her gowns of office were askew. Her chest rose and fell rapidly.

"High Justice, I was called out at a request from Captain Nebtawi and the city guard. You remember the watch you assigned them to?" She bit her lip nervously, watching as Maatmeses' face hardened.

"Of course. What of it?"

"Captain Nebtawi has been made aware of another meeting between the two. He bade me tell you they are together now, and have been for some time." Maatmeses' lips curled at the corners, as though something sour had filled her mouth.

"Then we will not have long. Return to Nebtawi immediately. Inform him he is to reprimand both of the accused, and to take them to the cells."

"Yes, High Justice. Of course."

The chariot rolled slowly forward, its tawny-brown steeds trotting at a gentle pace. A hundred more just like it followed suit, but it was the man who rode in this one that made it different. A dour grimace stained his features, and once bright eyes stared resolutely forward. Lips, that had not split with laughter for many days now, pinched tight.

Talamanke's humour had died with Ammon, on the bloodied sands outside Numas. Witnessing his lifelong friend as he had twitched on the ground like a mewling beast had torn him apart. The unholy abominations had taken savage bites out of his flesh, and he had babbled incoherently, half-eaten, tongue lolling, shouting of the blood-drinkers, of pain, and of screaming. Always the screaming. It was not as though he hadn't seen the victims of battle before; countless men had died in his arms, spluttering their last as he eased their minds and put their souls to rest.

But seeing Ammon like that, it had been different. He had wept openly, watching as what little remained of the great man burned and charred, and his smoky soul was released to the desert winds.

The chariot rolled on under the sun, its thin wheels carving smooth trails into the sand. Ptr's radiant orb filled the skies with its brightness; for once the dread clouds that accompanied the undead hordes were absent, visible as only an ugly black smear in the distance. The men of Numas felt the warm touch of their almighty sun god on their skin, and they appreciated it, for they knew that when they caught up with their unnatural quarry, and battle was joined once more, it would be shadow and darkness that pricked their flesh and chilled their heavy souls.

"Talamanke, have you any food left?" The soldier's shout broke him from his reverie, and he reached automatically over to the satchel that hung from the chariot's chassis. Grainy bread met his touch, and a skin of water. It was not much.

"Yes. Have it," he called back. The man was welcome to his supplies. He had little confidence that his appetite would return before battle was met, and he did not expect to require any food once it was over, either. He grabbed the chunk of bread and tossed it toward the other chariot. It fell neatly into the man's arms.

Whether they were victorious or not, Talamanke would soon be dining in the Underworld, with Ammon.

"Many thanks!" called his comrade, tucking into the foodstuff and passing a handful to his driver, but Talamanke was already lost to his thoughts, and the thanks went unheard.

Death did not scare him. It never had done, if he was honest with himself, but now he felt ever more accepting of it. Its inevitability. He would greet great Usirian with open arms, and a hundred blessings on his tongue, for he knew his soul was safe, and would live on for eternity in the afterlife.

There were no skeletons in his wardrobe, he thought, unable to shake the morbid presence of their enemy from even his most private of deliberations. Neither had he any legacy left in the world of the living. His wife of nine years had died almost two decades ago, and despite their best efforts, the gods had not willed it for him to sire children. When the wasting sickness had taken her, it had claimed what little he had called a family, and with it his hopes for a future.

A carrion soared overhead, riding the hot breath of the desert as it stalked his chariot vanguard. Doubtless more of the ravenous birds lingered behind, to hover portentously over the main body of Numas' army, and inadvertently cast doubt into the superstitious hearts of the men.

Wherever the vulture god Ualatp's servants flew, death and sorrow followed swiftly in their wake. It was as much a law of the Great Desert as the treacherous mirages, and the pilfering Arabian raiders, and everyone raised in Nehekhara knew it.

'Let your children fly,' he prayed silently to Ualapt, 'let them soar above me and damn me in their shadows,' and his fingers clenched tight on the sides of the chariot, pale and bloodless from his grasp. 'I care not, for I do not fear the unspoken promise of death that they make. I welcome it. I dare it to claim me, and my life.'

'I ask but one thing in return for my sacrifice. Take with me that cursed, whore of a blood-sucker, that blasphemous, unholy creature of Lahmia that murdered Ammon so viciously, or grant me the strength that I might claim it for you.' He made his wishes, his blessings, offering up his immortal soul to the scavenger god, who seemed so prevalent about the skies, and before Talamanke's surprised eyes the lonely carrion descended. It swept over his chariot, drenching him in its stench and noise, and while his men steered to avoid the path of the omen of death, Talamanke lifted his face and laughed.

It was a joyless sound, as menacing as it was supposed to be mirthful, and the bird joined him, its grating cries mingling with his laughter in a terrible chorus for Ualapt.

The god had heard him, of that he was sure. He would kill the blood-drinker, make it suffer for what it had done to his closest friend. That, he promised.

As the days went by, and the host of Numas gained ground on the shambling hordes of the dead, Talamanke's mood began to lighten. He was far from the jesting, quick-tongued man of his past, but he was talking again. By night, under the pale gleam of the moons, he would sit with his men, and they would share stories of battle and glory against the many enemies of the desert kingdoms. At face value, it was a senseless way to pass the time; Talamanke and the charioteers all heralded from the Living City, Khemri itself, and were battle-brothers from the same regiment.

But in the simple telling of the stories, their humanity lingered. With every recount of their glorious charges, with every detail of the chariot legion's triumphs as they crashed into the thick ranks of their enemies, the men's hearts grew bolder. Even the fast-approaching promise of death and horror that were the shambling hordes of their enemy could not undo it. Talamanke could feel the weight of Ammon's death growing faint about his shoulders. It was not that he forgot the terrible incident, and not an

hour passed when he did not dwell on it, but his thoughts toward it began to alter. An anticipation filled his limbs, an excitement at the prospect of avenging the man, that before had been but a grim, murderous drive.

He felt chosen. Proud. Confident. He would revenge the death of his longest friend with the eye and step of a warrior, not a savage murderer.

He would kill in the name of his gods. For Ptrā. For Djaf.

For Ualapt.

"How do you hope to challenge the might of one of the cursed blood-drinkers, and triumph?" said one of his comrades, as they had been discussing his designs one night. "They have the strength of a hundred men, and the speed of the wind itself!" It was cold, much colder than previous nights, and the little warmth spat out by their fire was quickly eaten up by the chill air. Talamanke had taken to sharing his vow with the other men. No longer did it feel like a guilty secret, or a shameful task. He was proud to declare his promise of revenge to them.

"With this," he said, reaching back and retrieving something from the shadows. Removed from the cloth that bound it, the object shone with a golden light that more matched the pitiful flames of the fire in their midst. Gasps whispered up from the small gathering.

"By the gods!"

"What potent weapon is this?"

"It is a khopesh," he began, "that I had enchanted by the priests of Ptrā. It belonged to our captain, and it will avenge its master's slayer." The priests had chanted over it for one whole day and one whole night, their eyes fierce with the light of Ptrā. He had sat through some of it, hearing as the same words were repeated over, and over, and over, till they were all he could remember and his head went dizzy from the incantation. It was

then he had left them to their work, and returned at dawn to find the weapon hot, and clean.

He tested its weight in his hands, and found it lighter than he remembered. Neither did it's ancient hieroglyphs glow as blindingly as they first had when the priests had returned the blade to him. In a moment of panic he feared the priests' efforts were undoing, but then their words came flashing back to him:

"Ptra's brilliance is strongest, and the weapons bite most deadly, when the mighty god himself shines bright about the sky. Dawn and dusk mark the corner points of its enchantments, for it is dawn and dusk that herald the coming and going of Ptra's chariot across the sky." It was night, and nothing but the glinting stars and the crackling fires of his men sufficed for light. He stashed the weapon carefully back into its cloth, and out of sight. It slumbered, its energies weak.

In the morning, that is when its true potential could be tested against the rotting flesh of their enemy.

"You think that with this blade, the blood-drinker will fall?" A quiet had settled over the group, as each man mulled his thoughts, turning them in the steady heat of the flames. Talamanke pinched his eyes, feeling for the sleep he knew lay crusted there, and gazed skyward.

"I think that it will know fear, before I am done with it, and I think that it will learn its place in the Great Desert. Our Great Desert. The Lush Plains will be its undoing."

"That is where we will meet them?"

"It is there that the armies of our most blessed and radiant Priest King Alcadizzar will meet them," he said, as though to the stars, "so yes, it is there that we will join them in battle." The silence returned, redoubled. Nothing could be heard, save the gentle murmur that slipped from several other groups of soldiers about the makeshift encampment, and the wispy sigh of a thousand sleeping breaths.

"Their ranks have swollen," muttered one of the soldiers. "I saw the necropolises that we passed this morning. Even at a distance, it was obvious they had been despoiled. There were pieces of them, left in the sand, as they staggered away from the ancient tombs and into the desert proper." His voice shook at 'pieces', betraying something of the revulsion the man felt for the creatures. That they all felt.

They were unnatural. They should be left in peace, to sleep out the ages, not forced to slave and toil again for a new master. Their very existences were blasphemy, of the highest order. When Talamanke spoke again, his voice was grim, defiant, and his tones resounded in the hearts of the men around him.

"We will lay them to rest once more. We will cut the strings that animate them, return their souls to where they belong, and destroy their foul captains and sorcerers in the name of the gods."

Somewhere, in the inky darkness of night, a vulture croaked, and Talamanke smiled.

Sleep came more out of habit than necessity, and it was with difficulty that Nebankh had managed an hour of it before waking. His body simply didn't yearn it anymore. It was as comfortable hobbling across the desert sands, or around an ancient temple, as it was laying still. Joints cracking like precious eggshells, the priest of Basth rose slowly to his feet.

It was warm outside, but not as bright as yesterday had been. He could tell, even from within the confines of their priesthood's grand tent, from the way the light failed to properly pierce its cloth. His claw-like fingers stretched out and clasped tight around a long, golden staff. They could not be far off from the enemy's forces now.

The smell of incense filled the tent, coiling around his weathered flesh and into his nose, but whether he had grown accustomed to the distinctive aroma, or his nasal passages had collapsed through time, he could not smell it. Instead he moved through the sedentary forms of his slumbering brethren, and toward the tent's exit. How any of them could sleep, especially during a time such as this, was beyond him. They should be

making preparations for the coming battle, and tending to the High Priestess, not lying, useless and unconscious, on their blankets and rugs!

The thought occurred to him that it might be Basth's doing. He had long since noticed that the priests of other temples 'maintained' some of their more peculiar characteristics, despite their lives stretching on into near uncountable years. The priests of Ptra, for example, were renowned for their fiery passion, and burning pride, much like that of their god himself. Those of Geheb, the earth god, were a stout and resolute lot, their stubbornness infamous across the deserts. This too mirrored the gritty, unmoving nature of their god.

It was not surprising to believe that they, as disciples of Basth, had inherited some of her more recognisable traits. Sleeping was something that the temple cats found all too important, and after witnessing High Priestess Istnofret's divine grace and agility at the battle outside Numas, he could not doubt the theory.

Pushing the cloth of the tent's entrance aside, Nebankh emerged into the camp outside. Soldiers jogged hurriedly back and forth, no doubt relaying messages between the various captains present, and others stretched, or stood talking and eating, easing themselves from sleep and preparing themselves for the day ahead. He could still remember the last thing he had eaten, all those decades ago. It had been a fish, caught and roasted from the River Vitae, and it had tasted glorious. The salty seasoning on his tongue, the soft, smooth flesh of the fish itself. As far as last meals go, it had been most magnificent. He had always been partial for fish.

"When do we march?" he called out, his voice dusty. He coughed, to better clear it, and a soldier turned his gaze toward the priest. Something of respect entered into his eyes, and he bowed slightly.

"We march in just over an hour, priest of blessed Basth." Nebankh nodded his thanks and wandered further into the encampment. Istnofret's quarters were a little distance away, with the other high priests', and he would commune with her before the march resumed. There was something he would most like to discuss.

The woman had been different, since banishing the undead from the east gate. Her mood was as unpredictable as a maddened steed; one minute, she would be deep in melancholic thought, the next, commands would be leaping from her smooth lips as though there were no tomorrow. He could see the changes in her very eyes, could see as she rose from whatever dark reverie held her, and an almost heated light shone in them. He recognised passion when he saw it, but it was usually an emotion reserved for the living, and the young, not one as old and liche-like as Istnofret.

Perhaps that was another product of Basth's intervention, he mused, his thoughts flicking to his earlier assumptions. Basth was a fickle goddess, her feline servants as prone to sleeping as they were to hunting down small mice and tearing them apart.

Istnofret's large tent rose into view, majestic and luxurious even by comparison to those of the other high priests. He strode closer, determined to walk out the aches that he knew would never leave him.

Up ahead he could make out the high priestess' guardians, standing unmoving like the statues that they were around her quarters. Gleaming golden masks, in the shape of Basth's favoured servants, turned slowly to watch as soldiers rushed past and slaves staggered before them, reviewing the proceedings with whatever ancient sentience that it was they possessed. The Ushabti were the perfect guardians: strong, fearless, as tough as the rock, bone and metal that made them, and as awe-inspiring as anything the legions of the hated Usurper could throw at them. They had more than proven their worth back in Numas, two hundred of the monstrous, walking edifices defending the southern gate against the sea of staggering corpses that enveloped them.

His ancient limbs creaking, Nebankh stepped up toward the entrance of the tent. Only a score of the godly constructs were in Basth's divine image, but those twenty were more than enough to defend the goddess' favoured priestess. Two towered over him, one each side of the entrance to Istnofret's quarters. They turned to regard him as he approached.

"I am a servant of Basth. Grant me passage, Ushabti." Whether at his invocation of the cat goddess, or through some more arcane recognition, the towering statues stepped aside and he stalked hurriedly past. That they obeyed him brought a glimmer of pride to stale, decrepit heart.

Stepping inside was like walking back into Istnofret's inner sanctum, back at their temple. Luxurious drapes hung from the sides of the tent, and golden furnishings caught the light and lit the makeshift chamber with a radiant brightness. Thin, intricately woven rugs covered the desert sand, and several bowls of incense smouldered quietly away. The husky sound of purring filled the air.

Nebankh limped across the rugs. The tent was thicker than his, and were it not for the lit braziers, and glassy mirrors that scattered their orange light about the room, it would have been quite dark. He leant heavily on his staff as he moved, using it as an aid against which to rest his weight. Since their extended chanting of the Incantation of Jaded Healing, a weariness had seeped into his limbs, and even walking had become a chore. He would heal, in time. He just needed a chance to recuperate, and commune with the goddess.

A figure shifted at the far end of the room, and he recognized her instantly as Istnofret, for she lounged in a golden throne. A small army of cats pottered around her. They moved slowly, with a majesty befitting the priest kings themselves, and as Nebankh neared a couple turned their languid gaze upon him. Most did not bother to acknowledge his presence.

Reaching the soft green rug at the base of Istnofret's throne, the priest of Basth abased himself. Bones creaked as he sank down, groaning under the weight of his aged body.

"Greetings, Liche Priest Nebankh." Her voice washed over him, sensuous and luxurious as the drapes that surrounded them.

"Greetings, High Priestess Istnofret. I trust you are well this morning"

"Indeed, Basth has blessed me with a clear mind." Upon hearing this, he threw caution to the desert wind, and spoke his thoughts.

"You are more certain in yourself, most favoured of Basth's disciples? You have seemed distracted of late, if our goddess may forgive me for saying so." He looked up into a pair of shining eyes, and a lump caught in his throat. He had overstepped the mark. It was none of his business what occupied Istnofret's thoughts, and if it was, she would have made it clear to them all long ago.

"Fate is a fickle mistress," she began, speaking slowly, carefully. "The gods have ways of deceiving us. They toy with mortals as a cat does a desert rat." A blade of fresh air stabbed into Nebankh's back, and he turned to see a dozen slaves enter the tent. They came with large fans, made of white feather and attached to wooden poles, and within a minute were amassed around Istnofret, wafting, praying, murmuring quietly. She closed her eyes, drinking in the sycophantic atmosphere that had suddenly enveloped her, and for a moment the priest feared that she would not continue. He was surprised to find himself most eager to uncover that which had plagued Istnofret's mind.

"Outside Numas' walls, in the thick of battle itself, I saw a face that I did not expect to see. I have not seen it for many decades; I thought it dead to me, a long time ago." Her chest rose slowly, calmly. "It is most curious that she should reappear, now."

"She, most favourite and adored of Basth?" Confusion stole over him. "You thought this woman dead?"

"She should be, by all rights. But Basth, it seems, has more in store for us both, after all these decades."

"Decades? How old is this woman? I presume she is a priestess of some kind, partial to the secrets of the Mortuary Cult, as we?" Her face remained expressionless, although the words that slipped from her bronzed lips were dark and troubled.

"Not the Mortuary Cult, but a far more blasphemous incarnation; the Cult of Nagash was one of growing strength when I fled Lahmia."

He gasped, unable to contain himself, but she continued heedless. "Through their unholy secrets, and the devilish sorceries of that fell lich priest, she has become the undead. A blood-drinker. The cursed, against which all Nehekhara now strives to defeat."

"And you know this woman? Who was she?"

The questions spilled from his desiccated mouth as his mind tried to piece together all he knew of their high priestess, of her history, her past. She opened her eyes again, fixing them on a cat as it leapt nimbly up onto her lap. Thin, strong fingers graced its tortoise-shell fur.

"She was the reason for my fleeing my homeland. She drove me into the unmerciful deserts, alone and forsaken. She condemned the man I loved to death, and in my anguish, Basth heard my pleas." Silence settled over the two, disturbed only by the sigh of air as it swept from the fans, and the rumble of the cats' throats.

"What do you propose to do about this ghost from the past? There cannot be much love lost between you both."

"Our history aside, she is cursed now, Nebankh. The desire to avenge my love is superseded by the need to slay this she-monster, for Nehekhara's sake. She is nothing more than a blood-drinker now, foul and unclean, and our armies, when joined with those of the holiest, most righteous and radiant Priest King Alcadizzar, will wipe them from the face of the deserts." Her fingers stroked faster now, rubbing deep and quick into the cat's fur. It relented under the pressure, stretching out across her lap. A hardness entered her eyes.

"She will fall, and whether by my hand, or another's, I will know peace once more. "

Horns blared suddenly outside, startlingly close to the priestess' tent, and the two of them started. They did not have long before the march resumed. Outside, contingents of soldiers could be heard racing about the sand, packing up their own temporary shelters and preparing themselves for the next stretch through the deserts. Steeds whinnied, and somewhere in the distance a dull chanting could be heard, as one priest or another invoked the presence of his god.

Battle was coming. Battle was coming, and all the host of Numas could feel it in their veins.

The story continues in the next Invocation



Model by MasterSpark

THE INVOCATION

in the next issue.....

Due out September 2010

Upcoming Articles

The Results of the Golden Bat Competition Summer 2010

An in-depth look at the Lahmian bloodline, including rules for Neferata

New 8th Edition tactics

Well this has been the most tiring issue for me yet, but the hard work by everyone has definitely paid off. The next issue should be a real treat for lovers of tactics, as we will have had time to test some by then!

So until then have fun and don't do anything I wouldn't do.....which means you can pretty much do anything!



Disciple of Nagash

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